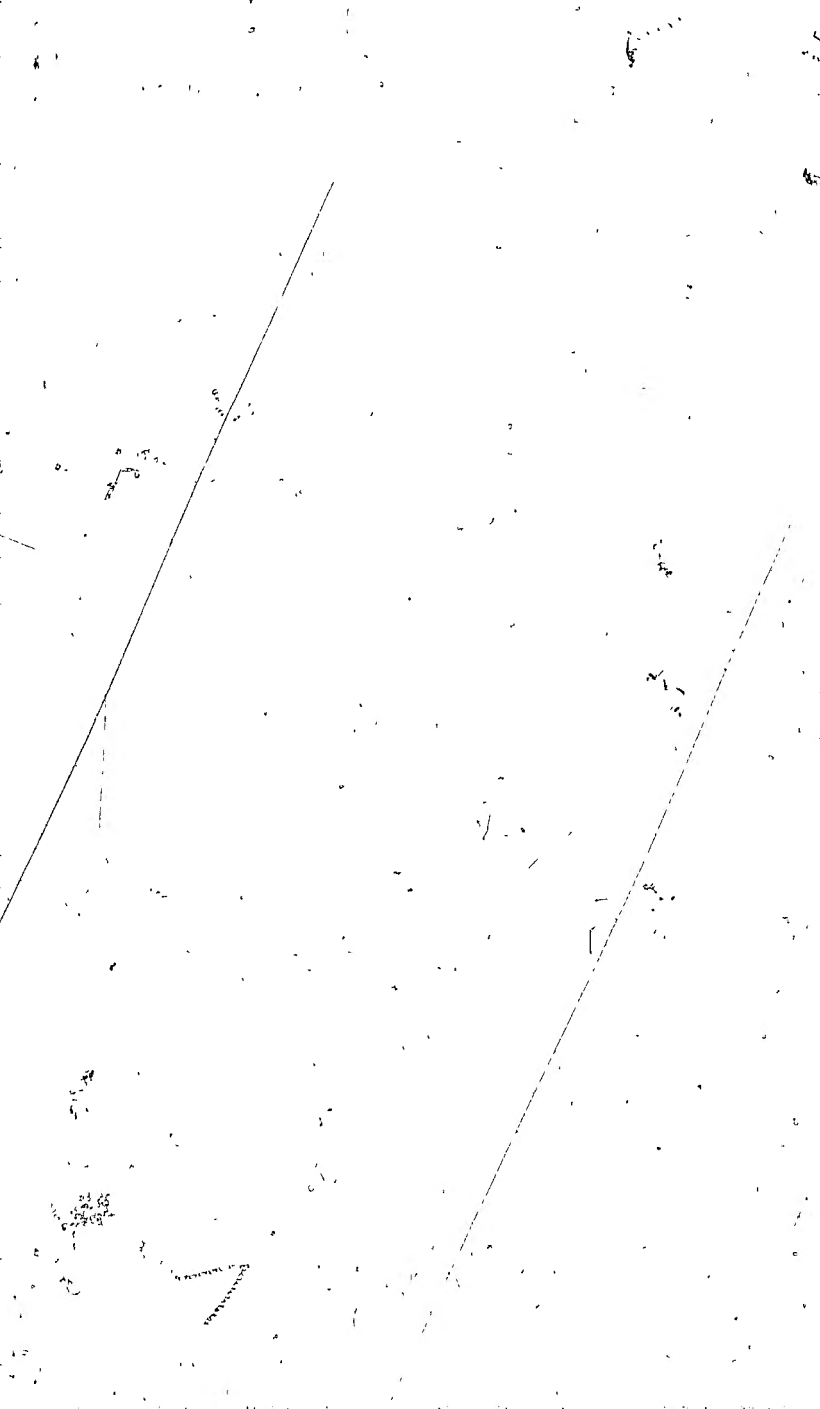


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REDGOLD



TO  
MY FATHER AND MOTHER  
MR. AND MRS. JAMES MELVIN TOOMBS  
OF VANCOUVER, B. C.



# REDGOLD

*A true story of an Englishwoman's  
development in the West*



*By*  
**CHARLOTTE GORDON**

**McBEATH-CAMPBELL LIMITED**  
**VANCOUVER, B. C.**





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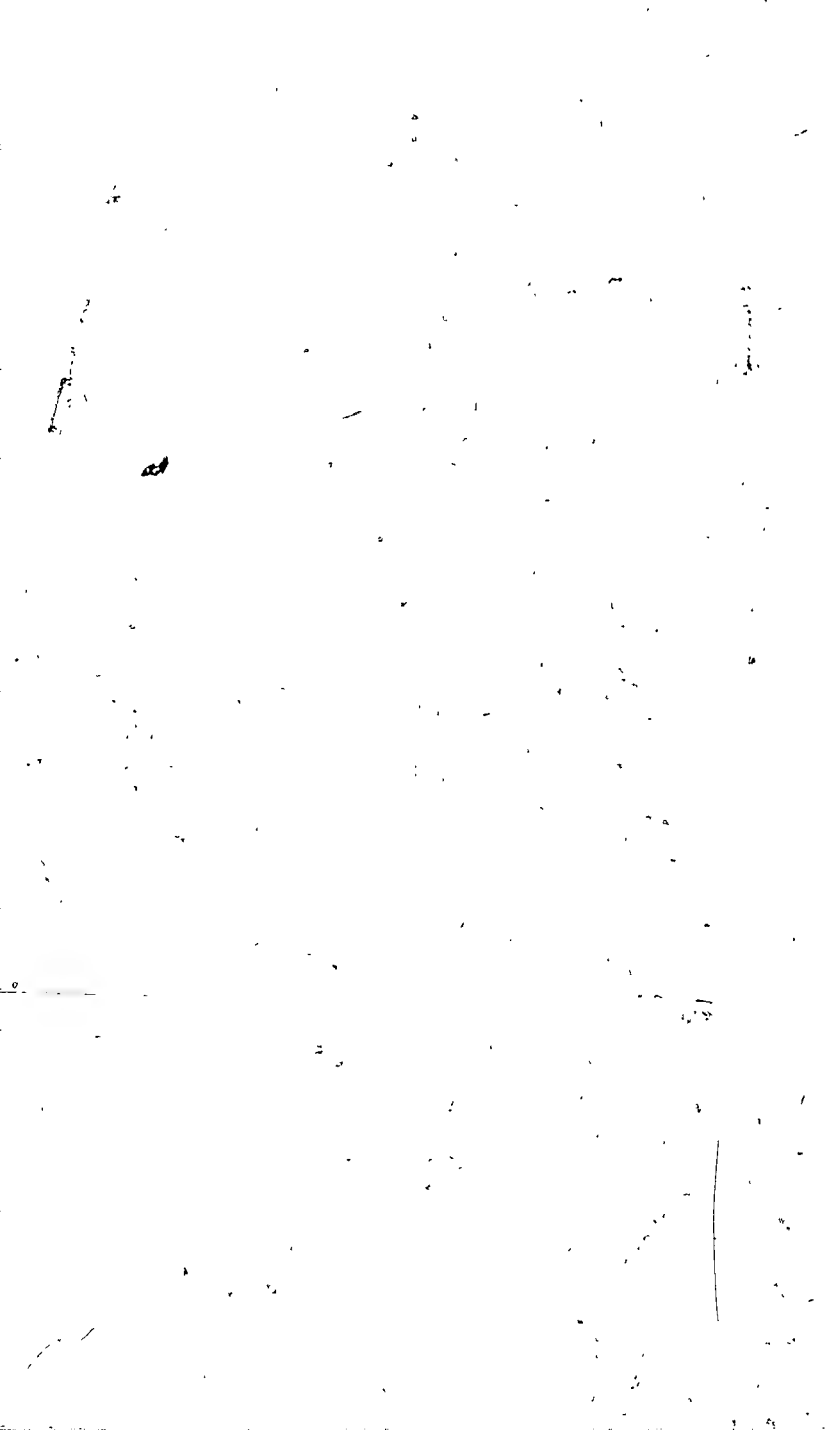
*First edition, November, 1928*

*Second edition, December, 1928*



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# REDGOLD

## CHAPTER I

### AWAY TO THE LAND OF PROMISE

**R**EDGOLD ASHLEY stood on the deck of the "Britannia," a slender, pensive girl, gazing with sad eyes on the parting scenes enacted on the dock below. She was leaving England, driven by her family from their ancestral home, a home whose lineage antedated the Norman conquest.

The waters were gently lapping the sides of the great ocean vessel, held by giant ropes to the piles and timberheads of the dock. People were passing to and fro on the gangplanks. The air quivered and a shrill vibrating sound struck the ear. The whistle blew the last warning. Gangplanks were raised as the moorings were released; an officer, carrying papers, came up the remaining plank; a hand signalled, and the last link with the land dangled in the air. The propeller churned, the

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black waters turned white and foamy, the dock gave an uncertain quiver and the leviathan moved into the open water.

For Redgold Ashley this ocean journey was not a trip, but a crossing. As she watched the fading coastline of her homeland, she murmured: "Good-bye, dear England. How can I live away from your shores? Shall I ever see you again?"

Thus she mused. A gentle, burnished light caressed her ruddy golden hair. To look deeply into her face, shadowed as it was by a faint melancholy, was to see written in those sombre eyes a strong suggestion of the tragic story that had precipitated her into her present situation. As she gazed on the widening stretch of water, she pondered on the similar widening of the stretch of time that appeared to lie between the present and the morning, her wedding morn, when she became Fred Ashley's wife.

The hum of chattering passengers, with its constant crescendo, made her feel strangely alone. They, too, many of them, were turning over a new page in life and enduring the same heartache. Yet they had the comfort of tender partings, loved ones and friends on

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shore, calling, smiling, waving tearful farewells. They had the compensation of taking with them to the new land the memory of those reluctant to give them up. She could not help but dwell on those final clutchings into space as the ship swung out from the quay side.

She and her husband, Frederick Ashley, were the only ones who appeared to have no friends, no one even interested in them. She felt that not a single soul in England cared that they were leaving to start life anew in a far country. Of all that crowd it seemed that they were the only travellers who had no farewell attentions.

At first, this rending of her life, by its very roots, had fascinated her imagination. Now she began to realize how much, how very much, she was giving up. The faces of those she loved came to mind; one face lingered—that of her dear old pal, her brother Gorrie. Thought of him brought those tears she had determined not to shed. How different her life might have been if she could have shared with him the secret that lay buried in her heart! She hoped, in the new land, to be able to forget it.

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As she meditated on the strange course her life had taken, a step near her went unheeded. That it did so proved the extent of her absorption, for there never lived a girl of keener senses. Merely to behold her was to perceive this. She was beautiful, in the flower of womanhood, some twenty-four years old. Her haughty head was crowned with heavy braids of hair, golden with a reddish tinge, that had given her the sobriquet of Redgold. She looked out of violet eyes that were dreamy when they were not alert. Her resolute chin contradicted a lovable dimple, while arched brows and clear skin completed an attractive specimen of femininity. Small and well-proportioned she appeared, in spite of the heavy tweed coat that enveloped her. About her neck was a blue-gray scarf, and on her head a small plain felt hat of like shade. There was about her the very evident stamp of the thoroughbred.

Again came the near footsteps, and again they went unperceived.

"No more musings, dear," whispered her husband, as he linked his arm in hers.

True, no more musings, no more substantial memories for Redgold Ashley. They were



associated with a life she was determined to forget. She must not dwell on home, family, friends, England. She must wipe out all remembrance of the haunting tragedy of her girlhood. How clear were the pictures of that Christmas time in her English home!

Her discovery had changed her from a happy, joyous girl into a crushed woman. She had suddenly seen the destruction of even her ideals.

Such was the dexterous art with which she had thrown wide the door to past days that there flittered before her scene after scene of her former life. As she closed her eyes the sadness that flowed through her carried her far back. She had been the victim of a strange experience. It had driven her from a sheltered life of ease and luxury into the working world, cutting her off, absolutely, from her proud family. It seemed that she had been living in a delirium in which realization came to her only in dark flashes of despair.

Memory moved like the plates of a kaleidoscope. Past was merged into present. Here she was on her way to a new country. She was Fred Ashley's wife! She turned to her husband, who had been chatting about the pas-

sengers and the distant coast-line and the new land. Rubbing her cheek against his coat sleeve, she told herself how dependable and understanding he was.

"Let us look at the glowing sunset where lies this land of promise," Fred remarked, as they walked along the deck. He moved with the spring and balance of the athlete, a rather fine specimen of young manhood. His dark hair swept away from a face, grave and kind. But it was the eyes, clear and fearless, that caught the attention of the casual observer. Just now they radiated hope. Looking down upon his young wife, those hopeful eyes gave out the assurance that she was closely linked with anything that he might accomplish in the new country.

"What lies before us, Fred, what new fate?" she asked.

He was silent for an instant. Then, in a hard voice: "You have to meet squarely what comes to you in life. I'm going back to the soil. You are my wife. That's enough for me. With you by my side I can face anything."

As she realized the significance of his words, the depth of his love for her, his confidence in

her, every nerve and fibre in her seemed to weaken. Then came those twinges of conscience that she had tried so hard to kill. Why had she married this splendid man when her heart was given to another?

How truly selfish she was! The matter was one that should have caused her infinite thought and many heart searchings. Yet she had never allowed herself to examine the state of her heart, but accepted the situation with the satisfaction of one who was very tired.

Now and then, especially when freshly impressed by his kindness, thought of the great wrong to him would come to her—just flashes of thought. After she had finally grasped the fact that she had consented to marry him and go out to make a home in the new world, her chief feeling was one of relief.

About the real romance of her life and about the dashing Jack Travers, who was the central figure in the drama, there was the magic of shared adventures and of eagerness. There was no glamour about Fred. Their associations, their experiences had been most ordinary, most commonplace. He had been rather like a rock behind her, on which she had grown, naturally, to turn, when life pressed.

too hard upon her. Her marriage, she knew, had not been an honest one. She could not delude herself. She had undertaken it selfishly to keep herself safe. She had really not thought of Fred at all, except to think that she honored him.

Jacob did not more faithfully serve for Rachael than did Fred Ashley give long devotion to Redgold. In his boyhood, his father, Reverend Mervin Ashley, chaplain in India, and Mrs. Ashley had undertaken to bring Redgold, a young girl of sixteen, from India, where her father was in military service, to school in England. Their son Fred, a tall, grave boy of nineteen years, was of the party. He was about to take up life in his uncle's cotton mill.

On board ship the young people formed a fast and lasting friendship that, through succeeding years, had developed, on Fred's part, into a deep love. He never expected to win her, but resigned himself to worshipping from afar. A poor clergyman's son and an employee of a cotton mill was out of the sphere of the Lady Redgold Redman. Yet he never lost hope.

Redgold had been impressed, all her young

life, with the fact that she was a Redman. She had been quite satisfied with the plan of her existence, the ordering of her life, the round of such pleasures as society and wealth can produce. But Fred Ashley had no place in them. He had to endure the misery of standing aside. When she gave her heart to the dashing Jack Travers, he felt that he had lost her, definitely and forever. Then destiny took a hand.

Circumstances crushed her. Then Fred came, without questioning, and took up the broken ties of their friendship. It was no ordinary meeting for them, their first association, after she had tasted of the bitterness of life. Had she been able to tell him at once of her unusual experience, she might have found comfort. She could not bring herself to do that. Time alone enabled her to reach the condition where she could unburden her heart. For months she nursed her hidden sorrow. And he never questioned her—just served and waited.

All the old subtle sweetness of her presence came to him, filling his heart with the old longing. Win her he would! No words could describe his fine desire for her. Month after

month he watched and guarded and guided her. Still that overpowering reticence held her. When she attempted to tell him that all was over, forever, between her and Jack Travers, when she tried to relate her experience, courage failed. The time might come when she could do so; she knew she would be happier in sharing her burden. Thus she thought; thus she acted; thus she delayed.

The time did come. Forces were closing about her. She stood, almost on the brink of a precipice. She must escape. Gathering up all her strength for the task, she told him. Piece by piece, she took up the disconnected experiences, the situations, the ideas, and wove them into her amazing tale.

Afterwards, for a certain space, of time which to her was indefinite, she was again stunned. Even to review the circumstances proved too much for her. Fred's persistent kindness was her only comfort. Then she began to realize how completely her days of sorrow had been softened and brightened and her thought moulded by him. Gradually there came to her an acceptance of her situation and a calm that usually follows a crisis.

Fred was filled with restless energy. He talked of how rich in promise was life in Amer-

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ica. He set her thinking of the possibilities of the New World, a world not given over to aristocratic notions and conventions. He finally asked her to go with him to America and begin life anew. He pleaded and urged without ceasing. She again felt the pressure of outside forces. Almost in desperation she promised herself to him. It helped her to keep a balance. She placidly accepted all of his plans and let the situation drift to its climax.

Now she was his wife. She had placed herself in his care, knowing that he would hold her a sacred trust. She shivered, however, as she saw the years of a loveless union stretch before her. She could not forget Jack Travers. But Fred must not suffer. He had taken her on her own terms; she was fair enough to determine to do her part. She resolved to strive, earnestly, to live up to his ideal of her. She would not disappoint him.

Standing erect beside her, the personification of fine manhood, he visioned the promising new life across the water.

"We are going to this new land where the love of fertile fields and open sky, handed down to me through generations of Yoeman ancestors, will be satisfied," he said.

"And you thought yourself doomed to work in your uncle's cotton mill."

"The time spent there was wasted. I shall always thank you, Redgold, for giving me ambition. I already lose myself in visions of half-mile furrows, in fields of golden grain."

He paused, then added in a softer tone: "You will forget your old life and outlook and be happy with me in this new land . . . My Redgold?"

At the tender, halting murmur of her name, her eyes filled. She was ashamed of herself for thinking of Jack Tavers at such a time. He had become so near and so real again. It was curious: for the first time she realized that, in thinking back over the years since she had broken with Jack, she seldom went further than the episode of that Christmas season. She could not bear to bring to mind those happier, early months: her handsome Jack, on leave from his regiment in India, their prospects and plans! How he had swept her off her feet and so far from the world in which Fred Ashley moved. Just when she was almost too happy she found that her house was built of cards.

Now she was going farther and farther



away from those associations. Like every pioneer she was taking a chance. Meeting and mingling with the various types of humanity on ship—at table, in the writing-room, in the music-room, on the decks—she began to understand that she had much to learn; it was manifest that she must batter down her wall of pride. Her habit of courteous aloofness, her shrinking from anything that bordered on intimacy or familiarity, held her fast. If she was going to succeed in this new land, she realized, she must be able to rub shoulders with humanity. She could not fetter herself with the old-world notion of “better-than-thou.”

Hampered by her narrow outlook, she felt it a breach of good form to converse with strangers; an introduction was first required. Fred had a different idea. He was free, eager, a thorough cosmopolitan, and soon became a favorite on ship. He played a game of cards here, cheered a lonely passenger there, even carried beef tea to the American who was suffering from mal de mer.

Endeavoring to arouse Redgold to an interest in the people, he suggested that she visit the old lady in a near stateroom.

“Like us, she is going to make a fresh start

in the new country."

"It must be hard to take up life when one is old."

"She does not think so, but declares that she is sixty years young."

"She evidently agrees with Julia Ward Howe, who contended that the sugar was in the bottom of the cup. However, it seems like the transplanting of an old tree."

"Well, go and see her. She will be a tonic for you."

It was in the elderly lady's room that Redgold met the lively, friendly Vera Fitz-Warren. With all the new-world breeziness, the young girl exclaimed: "I saw you come on the boat, and thought I would love to know you. How I do admire your beautiful hair! I hear that you are going to my hometown of Talton. I know you will be happy there."

"I am satisfied any place where there are horses, dogs and flowers."

"You are going to a horse-woman's paradise, Mrs. Ashley. We breed the best horses in the world."

"That sounds very cheering; but I must give up the idea of enjoying horses, though I can revel in flowers and have my dogs. We are

going to farm, and I must learn to work."

Vera Fitz-Warren's face fell. To her there was no attraction in the thought of learning to work. That implied drudgery and all that was commonplace. It did not fit into the fairy romance that she had woven about the English girl.

When she told her friends at table that evening, that the rather mysterious and delicately-made Mrs. Ashley was going to farm, they were quite shocked.

"Poor little blighter!" said one. "Tell her husband to take her back to England by the next boat. She is not the type for a rugged country."

"Oh, she may do very well," answered the kindly matron. "Many of those thoroughbred English people have been a surprise to me. They are always genuine sports, and real sports, and real sportsmanship is the quality that we most need in the West."

"What a fool her husband must be," the Cynic remarked. "Can you imagine, with those eyes and that hair, the time he will have? He should put her in a glass case."

"Those dreamy eyes are never dangerous," drawled the worldly-wise man. "It is those

twinkling eyes, those come-thither eyes of which one must beware. But I'm sure that the eyes of our English beauty are not always dreamy."

"Perhaps you are of the type who think there is a coaxing look in every woman's eyes," cried the kindly matron, rather resenting the man's remarks. "I have chatted with the English girl, and think she is gifted with a good deal of common sense which will carry her safely through."

"I quite agree with that," chimed Vera. "Our beauty has brains as well as a lovely face and pretty hair. She is too much of a horse-woman to be of the glass-case type."

"I should say that she is an English thoroughbred," championed the matron, "and that embraces all the finest qualities an English woman can give to the New World."

The following morning Redgold sought out Vera.

"What type of horses do you raise in your district?" she asked, eager to learn of the West.

"All kinds, even to the descendants of the winners of your famous Derby. We raise them for the world's markets, for the race-

track, for polo, for saddle-horses. Many westerners ride. We have most thrilling games on horseback, such as paper-chases, hare and hound and "getting into camp."

"How delightful! You have certainly made my pulse beat a little faster."

"Did you not know that we were a horse-loving people and a sport-loving people?" asked Vera, fearing that the English girl might think her country was suitable only for wheat and Indians.

"We do hear more about wheat and cattle and such unromantic things—not so much about pastimes and pleasures. Do you hunt in Talton?"

"Hunt?—do you mean rush after a poor little fox with a lot of beastly dogs as you do in England?"

"I mean fox-hunting."

"There are a few such barbarians in Talton and about there. They hunt the coyote."

Redgold blinked with surprise. For the first time she came upon one who thought that hunting was cruel.

"I think your hunting is inhuman, Mrs. Ashley," Vera cried. "I shall never forget standing in the corner of an English meadow and seeing

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a timid little hare torn limb from limb by those hateful dogs."

"I feel sure they gave the hare a sporting chance. You must be fair and acknowledge that the hare and the fox are hunted according to set rules. However, we need not discuss it, for my hunting days are over."

A little sob stole into Redgold's voice. Then it was that Vera, with a woman's intuition, sensed a deep sorrow in the winsome English girl.

"I hope you will like our West, Mrs. Ashley. You know it is different from England. You are broad-minded enough to accept the country and its customs and not attempt to alter them."

"I have lived in India. I know how tiresome it is to hear the newcomer expand on the management of the country and the natives."

Vera gave a gay little laugh. "I think the most unpopular person in our country is the one who goes about telling all and sundry what a rough land it is and how they lived and did things at home."

"I shall not impose upon the New World in that way. I am not expecting a bed of roses, but if I do find some I will not grumble about

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the thorns."

"You will not find many roses, but you may come upon some sweet-scented clover and may it bring you good luck."

Although she had not been friendly with the men on board, Redgold's very aloofness had attracted them. To win a smile or a "Thank you" was considered something worth striving for. As the end of the voyage drew near, the men in the smoking-room were discussing the various travellers. When the conversation was directed to the rather mysterious English girl who was going to farm in the West, the captain of the boat proposed a toast to the gamest little lady on board. The smoking-room to a man rose to drink to the aristocratic girl with her crown of red-gold hair and her Western farm.

## CHAPTER II

### FIRST EFFORTS

For all her bravery Redgold had a curiously homeless feeling as she sat in the little station of Talton, their destination. It was early morning and Fred had gone to seek temporary quarters. The night before, as they sped along, she watched the flying clouds, the moon and myriads of stars. The wondrous prairie night was almost as light as day. She was to learn that there was little darkness, only, short twilight night.

At times, during the night watches, as she was swiftly carried into the unknown world, there came a sense of exaltation. Now and again as the train creaked and swung, and once as another roared past, there came moments of terror. It seemed that the galloping monster, as an undertone, was droning, droning a weird warning that in front was danger.

Waiting in that gray dawn, she felt that she had entered a mysterious country, a feeling accentuated as the welcoming crowd disper-



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sed. She obtained a glimpse of Western life as she watched Vera Fitz-Warren, assisted by a couple of picturesque cowboys, mount a splendid horse. To the English girl, accustomed to the neat, small saddle, the Western equipage appeared a glorified arm-chair. The animal, black, with distended nostrils and an arched, glossy neck, gave a whinny of delight as Vera stroked his soft nose. Redgold's heart ached; there came a yearning for the four-footed chum she had so tearfully farewelled when she left her father's home.

The little station was crowded with tired travellers. Men slept on benches. An old man buried deep in a buffalo coat, slumbered resonantly. Several anxious mothers endeavored to pacify weary children. One brave woman spread out on a bench the contents of her lunch basket for her clamoring brood. The crying babies, the heavy air, the drabness of the room almost overcame Redgold; she felt faint. Half bewildered, she hurried outside.

When Fred returned he found her walking back and forth on the station platform, inhaling great draughts of tonic air.

As they wended their way to the hotel, the sun suddenly peered over the rim of the earth.

It flooded the square block of wood houses in front of them, the gaunt elevators and the stretches of prairies with a shimmer of gold. They felt a new courage. Hope and vision sprang afresh as the beauty of the scene persisted. The rising sun unrolled new vistas—the billowing foothills in their faint spring green, the distant snow-crested mountains. Redgold stood still absorbing the view and pondering on her situation—a stranger in a strange land. England was constantly receding.

They entered the primitive country hotel. Seated about in the entrance were the usual odd derelicts so typical of the Western towns. The young couple, as they waited, caused a ripple of interest. They had the mark of the old land, and conjectures at once began as to why they were here and how long they would stay.

"She don't look the sort for this country," said one of the loungers.

"Oh, shucks!—looks don't count. My old lady, when she hit this burg, was too high and mighty to eat in a Chink shop." A roar of laughter went up as the group visualized the portly and commonplace wife who had once

been fastidious.

As the soft, cultured voice of the Englishman, the "shucks" of the American, and the breezy, high-pitched Western voices mingled, Redgold realized that here was no class distinction. She was conscious of the absence of porters and "buttons" as she proceeded to help Fred with the luggage.

"I'll carry your bags," said a pleasant Western voice. She turned to gaze into one of the most friendly faces she had even seen. The eyes had the look of a man who was used to serving his neighbor.

"The bags are light," Redgold answered as he took them from her.

When they were carried in she offered a "tip." At once she realized her mistake and apologized.

"Oh, that's all right; but never offer a tip here to a man who gives you a helping hand. You are going to farm in the West? I hope we may be neighbors. If you need anything, remember that Bidwell of the X1 ranch is at your service."

With a jingle of spurs he departed.

"Rather a decent sort," Fred remarked, little dreaming that there was begun one of the

most sincere of Western friendships, and with a man who would share his last crust with the stranger.

Later they walked about. It is hard to realize just what it means to come into a new country. The busy people, with a cheerful ring to their voices, grated upon the newcomers, who appeared the only ones without a purpose.

They came along the one business street, its buildings interspersed with frame houses, painted white and set back from the street. The dry, dusty road; the crude appearing stores with their groups of men in front, shirt-sleeved, chairs tilted, smoking their briar pipes; the eating-houses with their strange names, were all part of a very new scene.

The shops were small; the corner grocery, where they purchased matches and toilet soap, seemed a mixture of coal-oil and cheese. It was in the drygoods store that Redgold came upon her first puzzle in money matters when she attempted to count one dollar and fifteen cents in shillings.

Sauntering on, they came to an open space where a number of Indians were congregated. Redgold, who had never seen Indians, and had visioned them as dressed in skin and feathers,

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found their costumes a combination of European and native dress. The squaws, with copper-tinted papooses strapped to their backs, showed their love of bright colors in gay dresses. The braves, their hair in two long braids and with neat moccasined feet, were of dignified mien. Redgold noted the human touch that makes the whole world kin—the children who played and cried and quarreled, just as did children on the streets of London.

It was in the next square, laid out as a park, with trees and shrubs and a few flower beds, that Redgold gave a gasp of delight; she heard a bird singing—large, red breasted, with a silvery note of the thrush. It carried her back in thought to the English woods and the rare peace she found in the song of birds. The trills of the songster in the little park revived buried memory. She was seated in the old garden while Jack Travers pleaded with her to forgive him. With a heart breaking with misery, she had refused, and could again hear herself saying: "Nature will help me to forget; the song of birds will comfort me."

In the park were a number of clean, well-dressed children. Redgold noted that none of them were poverty-marked, a promising condition in a new country.

They walked back to the hotel. A new interest was the typically mid-western town with its board walks, hitching posts, drinking troughs at the side of the street, odd cowboys who sat their horses with such ease. They watched as a cowboy rode a horse at a gallop down the road. Suddenly the rider brought his mount to a stop and swung about to the water-trough, displaying a horsemanship that thrilled Redgold.

Wandering down the street on one side and returning on the other, they spied the Catholic church, with its two gilded crosses glittering in the sun. Strangely enough, Redgold was to have another impressive view of the flaming emblems.

The setting of the town, in the river valley, delighted her; the green, undulating hills rising in graceful tiers; the mountain background in silhouette against the deep, blue sky. The contrast in vast stretches of prairie, marked by winding roads, completed the nature picture. Redgold had an intensive love of beauty, and this lovely scene satisfied her. She linked her arm in Fred's, her eyes wide. Upon these beauties of sight and sound appeared John Hunter.

The agent in London had written this farmer

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of the young immigrants. Mr. Hunter offered to engage Fred for work on his farm, provided Redgold undertook the kitchen work. The suggestion loomed up as impossible. She knew nothing of kitchen work; she could not cook. Looking with fear in her eyes at the man, he was to her the personification of dread in a forbidding land.

Fred shook his head. She saw that he would not entertain the idea of his wife working on this farm. He discussed the possible opportunity for himself. Mentally debating the plan, it came to mind that she had determined to be ready for what the new country demanded.

"I am open to engage a couple," said the farmer. "There are more chances for two, the wife to work in the house and the man outside. You will be up against it here if you turn down such opportunities. Think it over. I'll call this afternoon at the hotel."

Back in their room, they discussed their first Western problem.

"You are quite unfitted for this work," Fred declared. "You, a piece of Dresden china, to be employed in a farm kitchen. It is absurd. I can surely manage without you working

too."

"I am determined not to be a stumbling block. If there are more opportunities for a husband and wife together, we will carry through that way. I am not quite as useless as when I first left home."

"I know you are not useless, dear; but I do not like the idea of you undertaking the certain drudgery there will be, and I cannot see you working for other people."

"Do not be so foolish, Fred! We are in a new country and must adjust our standards. I must learn kitchen work and to cook. What better chance than this that has been offered me?"

The outcome of the discussion was Fred's very reluctant consent to the experiment.

They drove to the Hunter farm that afternoon.

Hard-handed, with a smug and self-satisfied air, the farmer offered, for their joint services, the sum of thirty dollars a month. They were "greenhorns"; they accepted.

Mrs. Hunter duly introduced three plain daughters, with the request that they be known as Miss Annie, Miss Alice and Miss Jane. It awakened Redgold's sense of humor;



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she thoroughly enjoyed some of the situations. Miss Alice prepared the first meal for them, and her disgust was most pronounced when Redgold asked for white sugar instead of the impossible brown stuff to sweeten her tea. It was at once evident to the young English people that the immigrant was of small consideration. Indeed, the newcomer appeared a mark for petty hostility.

The Hunters intended to have full value of their thirty dollars. They had a way of exacting the utmost farthing. Redgold was bewildered. To be suddenly transplanted to a Western farm kitchen was a novelty. She was like one finding a way in the confusion and chaos of a foreign city. What a sight was that Kitchen; the heap of dishes to be washed, the impossible sink with its pots and pans, the cooking stove, supposed to be polished with some magic black stuff.

She compared herself to the little girl in the old fairy tale who, as a punishment, was given, by the good fairy, a great task: to unravel many skeins of different colored silks and then to string the never-ending number of colored beads to match. And all was to be accomplished in a given time. Redgold was able to

laugh. The real tragedy of her situation had not yet been realized.

The first lessons were in the methods of bread-making and butter-making. After the butter was taken from the churn, Redgold, noticing a crinkly board, asked if it were used in the butter process. After a fit of laughter, Mrs. Hunter informed her that it was a wash-board. She was, however, soon taught the use of that part of kitchen equipment and to iron and to scrub. How she tried to do the tasks for which her small, white hands seemed so unfitted! She appeared a hothouse plant thrust among weeds, and crushed was her sensitive soul when the weeds made joke of her cultured accent and dainty hands.

Miss Alice frequently remarked: "Oh, you English are so fussy about your hands, which were made for work."

How her knees hurt, how her back ached, how chafed were her hands, how burning her feet! In trying to wash, she rubbed more skin off her hands than soiled marks off the clothes. She thought she knew all there was to learn of scrubbing a floor, to make wet the expanse, which she proceeded to do. She had the large kitchen resembling a flooded area. As she

wiped and swept and wiped the pools of water, the tears ran down her cheeks—the grief of a crushed spirit.

There were lessons in the curing of meat; hourly and half-hourly trips to the cellar were required. She peeled potatoes in quantities, and dug out of barrels of black earth the last year's vegetables, preparing large vessels of them daily. At the end of each day she wondered if she could endure another.

Yet she was learning. She felt proud of an oven full of bread—loaves, golden, brown, created by her own hands. She studied the cookery book, tried various receipts, learned to make a fairly good cake and excelled in concocting jam tarts. At the table, the French-Canadian, who worked on the farm, refused to cross himself, as was his custom, until the tarts were on the table. With David Grayson, "there is nothing that so draws men together as their employment at a common task."

The common arrogance of the Hunters amused her, their shallow pretences bored her, their indelicate probing into her private affairs infuriated her.

She stole away from work one hot afternoon to rest. Lightly opening the door of her room,

she was horrified to see Mrs. Hunter and a visitor looking through her wardrobe. A dinner gown, kept for its bitter, sweet memories, was thrown on the floor. The visitor, arrayed in a delicate blue velvet evening cloak smothered in a white white fox collar, was preening herself before the mirror. Redgold stood speechless, watching the women, who had not heard her.

"Did you ever see such indecent looking dresses?" asked Mrs. Hunter.

The remark stung Redgold into activity. She demanded the meaning of their intrusion. After an unpleasant scene, Mrs. Hunter departed with what dignity she could command.

Redgold quivered with indignation.

"What have I brought myself to? Do I have to mingle with such people the rest of my life?"

She picked up the shimmering dinner gown, and as a faint, Oriental perfume came to her nostrils, she buried her face in its folds. Then she threw it on the bed and walked back and forth, her color high. She vowed, amid the scattered finery that she would win a place where she would not be subjected to such indignities.

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Fred's part was easier. He was learning the business of farming, for Mr. Hunter, in spite of his miserly ways, could farm. But Redgold was a source of deep worry. What a brick she was!

They had little time for discussion of their situation. Every hour, from dawn to dark, was filled; at night they were weary in body and mind—at times, almost too tired to sleep. Redgold usually related her day's experience, and they would laugh. Fortunately they were young and had not lost their sense of humor—truly, a sense of humor is a wondrous thing.

With her knowledge of nature lore and love of all things beautiful, she did find time to enjoy the great outdoors, the beauties of spring on the prairies and in the foothills. With the season at its high tide, she watched the ever-fascinating events that occur as it dissolved into summer. The mysterious shadows of the rolling plains, lighted by the morning sun, seemed to glisten with myriads of yellow lights, or, as twilight deepened, become enfolded in a violet haze. Tender in coloring came the pale mauve crocuses, the violets, the golden buffalo bean. Wild rose time she loved; but her complete satisfaction

was in the slopes, blue with lupins. These interests helped to keep down that queer emotion, that swelling in her throat that would arise, in spite of all brave resolves.

For a time the excitement of the adventure buoyed her up. Then, in the intense summer heat she began to feel a physical exhaustion, and with it all the home-sickness and old bitterness. The solitude and the beauty of the surroundings, which had so charmed, failed to give courage and steadiness. It was at night that she had opportunity to look into her state of mind when she would lie awake, long hours, appalled at her situation.

The breaking point finally came. It was in the evening of a July day that she walked up to the spring above the farm, staring at the land in which seemed to lurk struggle and drudgery. She faced, from a new angle, the life to which she had committed herself. The crudeness, the isolation, were terrible. Throwing herself down on a grassy knoll, utterly broken and weary, she gave way to her despair in all the pent-up sobs of the last hard months. When too spent to longer weep, she lay in utter abandon, eyes closed, hair dishevelled, nerves shaken. As the pain wrenched again

and again, she caught her breath in quick grasps and then murmured of her futility. Where now was the bravery of spirit with which she had started?

Leaning on an elbow, she plucked a tiger lily. The slopes and pastures were gorgeous with the flaming flower. Idly and unconsciously, she began to study its perfection of form and coloring. Life could not be all drab with these to enjoy. Her mind wandered to what she had been reading: The Indians, to whom nature's programme was an open book, named each month for its most striking event. July was the thunder moon and high moon of the year, when there was unfolded all the richness of spring's outbursts. It was strange, she thought, with all that richness about her, that she felt only the pain and bareness of her life and the gnawing ache of remembering.

As she lay, lost in reverie, there came floating through the air the sweet, low music of the bell from the little Catholic church in the valley below. Almost, it seemed as if the soft, delicate air through which it passed had a rarefying influence upon the sound itself, and had mellowed its tones into a strain throbbing with peace. She stood up, listening, feet deep in

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the grass and scented flowers, facing the sunset, a golden glory in the western sky. There were few lovelier sights than a sunset from one of the smaller hills, near the Hunter farm, when the crests of the mountains beyond seemed to catch fire from the flaming clouds. and below them the valley was filled with those tender purple and gray shadows that one sees on a rare canvas.

The scene and the soft musical air made her think of home, of Easter bells; and she felt the depression, the bitterness slowly drawing away, the darkness less dense, the despair less keen, hope coming softly through and easing her burden.

Why could she not become human again, enfolded by such beauties? Within its radiance things common, things bitter slip from the soul. A sort of largeness pervades the mind. Straightening her shoulders, smoothing her hair, she walked down the slope. It was no scene, no hour for dark thoughts.



## CHAPTER III

### THE FIRST HOME

Came late July. Fred secured work on the Bidwell ranch, just out of Talton, and the Ashleys were house-hunting in town.

"I'm going to help you find a house, Mrs. Ashley," declared Mr. Bidwell, commonly known as "Stoney." In spite of an abrupt manner and an almost unfortunate frankness, Redgold sensed in the Westerner a heart of gold and an old-world chivalry that he endeavoured to hide. Resourceful, gifted with an unusual amount of hard common sense, he proved of great service.

They had difficulties: there were no small houses to rent. "Stoney" suggested taking a large one and renting rooms, a plan they finally agreed upon. The next matter was the furnishing. Most of their requirements were purchased at various auction sales.

What a storehouse of treasures one farm house proved to be! That the rare specimens of art, the antiques, the Persian rugs should be

found on a Western farm amazed Redgold. She had to close her eyes to all the beautiful things and suppress her desires, as she turned to the purchase of kitchen utensils and such commonplace essentials. With a wry smile, she thought that it is not what you want but what you can do without that matters in a new country.

She almost yielded to the temptation of an attractive picture. It was an oil, a hunting scene by a well-known R.A., realistic to a degree, with the pink-coated M. F. H. on a glorious grey hunter, and the hounds just turning the corner of an English lane. She could purchase it for ten dollars.

"Stoney," with his usual Western drawl, said: "Ten dollars for that! I wouldn't give ten dollars for a wagon load of them. I'd rather spend it on feed for a real horse. A picture is all right, but just now you are more in need of a frying-pan."

When the sale was over, Redgold had no pictures or Persian rugs; but she did have kitchen utensils, a pair of blankets and some common chairs.

As they drove home, she remarked: "You are a good buyer, Mr. Bidwell."

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"So would you be if you had hit this country twenty years ago as I did. In those days we could make almost anything out of a flour barrel—sawn in half it made a good round table; cut away part of the front, stuff it with gunny-sacks, and you had a fine arm-chair.

"You had ingenuity."

"No, ma'm, just a flour barrel."

"Well, you did good work with it."

"You should see the frames I made for the pictures of fair ladies and wall-eyed horses, that I cut out of magazines."

"What a mixture of subjects! I'm sorry I was not here to see your works of art."

"My child, you have come to this country early enough."

The first flush of dawn was mellowing the eastern sky when Redgold opened her eyes in her new home. Gazing out of the window, the prairie stretched away to the woodland and foothills. In the foreground were the roofs of

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the houses, and outstanding were two glittering crosses.

Her heart stood still. She was carried far back. It was the city of marvellous sunrises, the port of Bombay. She lay in her berth in the ocean liner that would carry her to England and school. In view were two fiery crosses. As the vessel moved away those sun-touched emblems dominated the scene. Her kindly chaperon had said: "The memory of them shall be our talisman. May it bring us joy."

It was such a clear picture to Redgold, and what had it brought her? She thought with increasing depression of the coincidence. Was this an ill-omen? Surely life would not again cheat her?

The house was finally in order and roomers secured. Then began the novel and worried period of the early months of housekeeping. With their meagre income, with the cost of

living high, their goal of becoming independent farmers seemed remote.

Fred, endeavoring to make life brighter for Redgold, would worry her by an occasional extravagance: a box of chocolates, a plant, some flowers. He would be disappointed at her quiet acceptance, even though he knew that it was because of the expenditure. She was determined to do without those luxuries dear to the hearts of most women: flowers, sweetmeats, sweet-scented nothings, that had been a part of her every-day existence.

Her only lapse was in the purchase of magazines and an occasional book. Copies of "The Graphic" and "Punch" were usually about the sitting-room. In the cool evenings there was an attraction about the simple place, with pretty chintz, the warmth and cheer of the box-stove, the mellow light of the hanging lamp. Fred read in placid content to the accompaniment of Redgold's knitting-needles.

The drabness of the life aroused in her a feeling of rebellion. The spirit of Jack, at times, was with her when she would allow her mind to wander to what might have been: Jack reading, Jack heaping wood on the fires, chatting with Jack of the affairs of the day.

Lost in such thought, she sometimes failed to answer Fred's remarks. If he understood, he gave no sign.

One night, when she was particularly depressed, her husband's constant whistling and humming of popular airs irritated her. "Please do stop," she exclaimed; "you worry me."

After a silence he asked her if she were feeling better.

"Yes, I'm remembering your motto: fight, don't cry."

"Fine! All the women's tears in the world would not water a single plant without killing it. I hate to see you depressed, dear. I know we are thrown on our own resources and you are lonely, but we are not adjusted yet. We will be. Cheer up."

His mere strength had in it a bracing quality that helped her to find her balance. She saw his attitude in struggle as an almost naive disclosure of enormous courage.

Following such a mood, she would arouse herself to household duties, endeavoring to keep the house comfortable, the meals acceptable. Yet the soups were impossible, the meats parched, the pies soggy. She was a failure as

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a cook. She took comfort in keeping about the house a profusion of flowers—wild blooms and gay autumn leaves, wondering just how she would decorate the rather barren place when winter came.

She caught glimpses of her past life in the human driftwood, the young men with cultured voices and Oxford manners, who came to her for rooms. They were usually younger sons, those who were cut off from their families, shipped to the New World, supposed to disappear. The visit of a young man with an air of breeding and a Cambridge accent deeply stirred her. His recognition of her as the Lady Redgold Redman revealed him as the son of one of her father's old friends. As they talked, she knew what was coming and was prepared for the remark: "When I left home you were about to marry Jack Travers. I see that you changed your mind." She was thankful that life in the West was too busy and too eventful to allow much time for digging into personalities.

However, the shock of meeting this man of her old world turned her thoughts inwards. The memory of the old life was there, the old hurt was there to be revived, a spark to set a

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fire. She found that she unconsciously kept it as something apart, a relic in a small, dim chapel to which she could occasionally pray.

It had not occurred to Fred that they would be so much in touch with Redgold's old life. In the foothills, on the ranches were a number of Englishmen who had been ensnared by the lure of the West. They made Talton their centre for supplies and amusements, and gradually drifted to the rather pleasant home of the Ashleys. This association kept Redgold restless.

Fred knew little of her state of mind until an incident opened his eyes. Stung by an unexpected irritation, she cried bitterly: "I can't keep up this struggle. I am just too tired and lonely and discouraged." She moaned and threw herself on the couch. Fred did not immediately attempt to soothe her. When she quieted a little, into soft sobs, he went beside her. Taking her in his arms, her head on his shoulder, he held her close. So they sat, Fred crooning to her, until she was quiet and he knew that he was a refuge.

There, his arms about her, he told her that all he wanted was to have her and make her feel his love; that it was great enough to over-



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come struggle and loneliness and the big ache in her heart. He felt within him that strange combination of the love of father, brother and husband. It seemed that he had always been fathering Redgold—a shy young girl on the boat on her journey from India, a lonely girl at school in those better days before she knew Jack Tavers, a crushed girl after she fled from her father's home. He had always been her refuge.

How the protecting love filled his heart as he thought of her constant need of him! Gradually her breathing softened, her head rested on his shoulder with an assurance at once comforting and promising. Odd, he reflected, that he had never thought of anyone but Redgold. No other woman held the smallest place in his life. Yet he had not had her love, but there swelled up in him the hope that a real bond was developing.

The storm had quieted. With the calm of the following day came reflection and the resolution to show herself worthy of Fred and his love. But how?

She recalled his talk with the homesick young Englishman: "Find some interest about you, in the people and the things they do; become associated with their life. Have the right outlook. Thoughts of home, of art galleries, the old libraries, of shooting in the country, are like glimpses of paradise to me, too; but they stir up useless longings. Forget them."

She put herself in the young man's place, and the words drove home. As she figured Fred, a man who walked the earth with chin up, eyes level, shoulders squared, she could hear him as he spoke, and it seemed as if the words were meant for her: "We have a land here, new to our hands, new social systems evolving—why, this whole virgin West is ours to conquer, with no obstacles of tradition or convention. That chap who lectured in the hall last night sounded the right note when he said that this was the West of big men, loyal women and great achievements. I tell you, that inspired me. We ought to be in that

class."

The more she thought, more clearly came to her the aphorism: "One can find peace only in one's own soul."

With her mind clarified by this determination, she listened with eagerness to Fred's daily report of the season at its richest. She frequently walked to the farm when the wheat was changing from green to ochre.

Harvest time brought fresh enthusiasm, heightened by the sound of the tinkling knives of the binder as the wheat went down before and piled in golden sheaves on the prairie.

Redgold watched the big thresher roll in. With it came the men, unshaven, hot, tired but noisy and jolly. Three times a day there was a busy scene, and Redgold was among the busiest. Two long tables, oilcloth-covered, were loaded with supplies. The clang of an iron triangle called the men to dinner; and how they did answer its bidding! They fell to with the same energy as in their work, and were through and away without wasting a moment.

Outside the pace grew faster. An autumn sun shone red upon the workers. From every leaky joint the noisy thresher shed hot water

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and steam. The sheaves were engulfed in the separator, and the grain, in a shining stream, flowed into the open-mouthed sacks.

The great machine, like an irresistible magnet, drew Redgold. Under a cloud of dust, with panting men, jolting wagons and the determined whirl of the separator, the work progressed without rest or pause. In it Redgold sensed the greatness of the land of primitive shacks, of vast wheat fields and boundless hopes.

## CHAPTER IV

### FITZ-WARRENS AND THEIR RANCH

In early October Vera Fitz-Warren burst upon the scene.

"Where in the world have you been, Mrs. Ashley? I just traced you up and hurried to see you. How well you are looking! It seems that our country agrees with you."

"I think it does. The eternal sunshine and clear air are like tonics for me."

Vera was an old friend in this land of strange people. They laughed and chatted and exchanged confidences with utter abandon. Finally: "I want you to come out to our ranch," Vera cried, "and very soon, while we have this ideal weather. First, tell me what you have been doing."

Then followed a recital of the experiences on the Hunter farm. Wide-eyed, Vera listened to the tale. As one of those girls who own the earth, she had no understanding of Redgold's endurance. "I cannot see the necessity of subjecting yourself to it," she said. In expressions far from gentle, she gave her opinion of

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the Hunters and the whole situation. "Let us forget it. We will not dwell on such a picture. Now you are in your own home, and I am amazed to learn that 'Stoney' Bidwell is a constant visitor."

"Why should you be amazed?"

"Because you must be the first woman to whom he has spoken civilly for years."

"How interesting! Is he a confirmed woman-hater?"

"Surely! The story goes that he was to marry the belle of Talton, but she changed her mind. It happened on April Fool's Day, and I think the joke of it made him especially bitter."

"I shall be more kind to him."

"He evidently thinks you are kind enough now, from the attention I hear he gives you. Now about that visit. You must see our home. You will like father. He is one of the Fitz-Warrens of Worsley Castle. I was returning from a visit with grandfather when I met you."

Redgold, with her usual calm, did not show her surprise.

"Then your father must be a son of Lord Worsley?"

"He is, but father is much nicer than grandfather. He will love you too, dear. I told him how lovely you are and that you are fond of riding." Vera's arms were thrown impulsively around Redgold, who noticed a mist in her eyes.

"Sometimes I am unhappy, even at our lovely ranch."

"I am so sorry, dear. Can you tell me about it?"

"Oh, thank you. When in England, I learned that they did not want Mummy there."

"Perhaps your mother does not want to go?"

"I do not know, but daddy says she never can go."

Brushing away her tears, Vera suddenly turned to a discussion of her ranch home.

"I must tell you of our pretty custom. We have a little bit of England in a huge fireplace, and it is always piled high with pine logs, ready to light, when we see our visitors cross the bridge near our home. It has become almost a rite with daddy to so welcome our guests."

The following week Vera came to town, returning home with Redgold and "Stoney" to

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Canyon View Ranch. As they rode over the winding prairie trails and on and up into the forest, Redgold's heart thrilled anew with the keen enjoyment of the scene. The lively chattering girl with her quaint air of motherliness, the silent, resourceful "Stoney," were kindred spirits.

"I want you to see our home at sunset. The dark brown bungalow against the green pines and purple mountains, when all aglow with golden light, is like a Persian garden."

"That sounds like a picture from the Arabian Nights, Vera."

"Don't swallow all that Persian garden stuff, Mrs. Ashley," "Stoney" broke in. "Wait till you see the tumble-down sheds and the Chinks' bunkhouses. Why, the Fitz-Warren ranch is a byeword for its ornery bunch of shacks."

That was too much for Vera. "I shall not tell you any more about our place while 'Stoney' is with us."

"That's the girl Vera. I can't bear to hear a decent Western ranch turned into a Persian cat."

"Now 'Stoney,' do agree for once that this is a marvellous nature picture before us."



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"Oh, scenery is all right, Mrs. Ashley, but it won't fill the stomach."

"Don't bother with him," chimed Vera. "He will not agree that anything is beautiful."

"No, the only thing of beauty to me is a good horse."

"I am glad you are admiring the scene, Mrs. Ashley, for all this land belongs to father."

Redgold had seen large farms, but here there appeared to be miles of land.

"What are those small houses with red roofs, in among the hills?"

"Those are Indian houses on the reservation."

"I looked for teepees."

Vera laughed. "You English people appear to think that the Indians live only in tents and wear nothing but beads and feathers. I was always explaining about their civilized condition when in England."

"That's a sore point with Vera," "Stoney" said in a very kindly voice. Redgold observed a pained expression on the young girl's face.

"Well, I'm quite ready to learn of the Indians, Vera. You know, we obtain a wrong impression of everything at a distance."

"You will find some of the Indians educated and quite intelligent. Will you try to like them, Mrs. Ashley? There is really so much that is fine in them. You must see their farms. They have great fields of the best wheat in the country."

"I had no idea they were industrious."

"Yes," "Stoney" answered; "this is the only part of the country where we can get the Indians to do much."

"There are heaps of Englishmen who never work. My grandfather never does, and thinks his son is a disgrace because he toils."

"Don't blame the noble Englishman for not working," Redgold murmured.

"Don't blame the noble Indian if he toils not," chimed Vera.

They entered an avenue of tall pine trees, the ground soft with their needles, the air redolent with healthful odor. A startled squirrel eyed them with curiosity, scolding as he watched the intruders slowly drive through the charming vista. The nature-loving Redgold was in ecstasy. "What are those tiny brown birds?" she queried.

"The common chickadee, but I love them because they stay with us all winter."

"What a cheerful note they have." Looking at "Stoney," she asked: "Don't you enjoy them?"

"They would be all right if they were geese, Mrs. Ashley. Think of the good feed we would have if geese were as tame and as plentiful as they are!"

"Really, 'Stoney,' you are incorrigible. Apparently the gifts of nature appeal to you only through the stomach."

"Now you can see the bridge over our canyon," cried Vera.

Redgold shuddered as she saw the frail link across the fearsome canyon. Several hundred feet below the torrent, amongst great rocks, roared its stormy way.

"Don't be afraid, Mrs. Ashley. It's really quite safe."

"Yes, it's safe enough if it don't break," "Stoney" added. "The Indians call it 'White man's folly.'"

Despite his jeers, the wagon passed safely over; a sudden turn brought the ranch house into view.

Redgold had never seen a more picturesque situation for a home. Built entirely of logs, with leaden casement windows and large

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veranda on two sides, wild clematis, or "old man's beard," clambered up the pillars.

Overhead the fading sunset, a gold and lavender sky was changing into grey. Cattle browsed in the fields below. Calves were making the dust fly along the slopes. Melodious and clear rose the clarion calls of the cowboys. It was music to Redgold, a touch of Western life that thrilled her. Here and there along the slopes, where the aspens clustered, a horse would flash across an open space. High up on a scrubby ridge of the hill rang down a voice, lustily singing. As they slowed up in front of the bungalow, Redgold caught the lines:

"The green beneath and the blue above.  
The dash and danger and life and love."

"Listen," she cried, as she repeated the lines. "How delightful! I was reading of the cowboy songs. It is claimed that there is a deep religious feeling in some of them."

"Religious?" gasped "Stoney." For a time he was speechless.

The remark was too much for him. Finally he said: "I'd advise you to get a dictionary on cussing before you read their songs."

Dressed in gray tweeds, cap in hand, Maurice Fitz-Warren stood on the veranda to receive them. He greeted Redgold in a cultured English voice: "Vera has frequently spoken of you. I am happy to meet you." She was conscious of a handclasp and a pair of rather sad eyes.

"Come along and we will find Mummy," Vera finally said.

Linking arms, they entered the big room with its welcoming fire. Its walls and floor were adorned with an almost priceless collection of skins. Mounted heads and an assortment of guns spoke of the sporting master. A setter dog rose lazily and carressed Vera's hand.

"Mummy is helping Wong with the dinner. I will take you to your room."

The sonorous sounds soon announced dinner. A dark, heavy woman stood at the head of the table, plainly a full-blooded squaw. Could this be "Mummy" of whom she had heard so much?

Then came Fitz-Warren's voice: "Mrs. Ashley, my wife."

For an instant Redgold was speechless. The soft, brown eyes of the woman, raised in a

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fleeting glance, reminded Redgold of her faithful old English dog. Impulsively, she moved to the woman's side and, holding out her hand, murmured: "I know we shall be friends, Mrs. Fitz-Warren."

The dinner passed off very pleasantly. The conversation buzzed around comparisons of the old world and the new. Redgold was intrigued by the strange situation before her. She saw the squaw-wife, a thing apart, having no place in the conversation, and, with lowered eyes, appearing to give no heed to it. Even "Stoney," an old acquaintance, with his understanding of Indian ways, could not draw her out.

After a momentary embarrassment, Vera had regained her old irresponsible buoyancy. That there was a happy camaraderie between father and daughter was evident. Redgold was amused when her host, turning to his daughter, said: "To mark Mrs. Ashley's visit, we will have coffee in the living-room."

"Oh, daddy, I hope it will not be quite as stiff an affair as at grandfather's. Each night that coffee business used to remind me of a christening. I always thought that butler chap looked like a parson, and the way he caressed a tray gave me a thrill."

Redgold was in a glow of content as she sat listening to Fitz-Warren's tales of Western life. The room was eloquent of sport and adventure: each mounted head, the cougar, the bear, the wolf, the coyote, and even the little white weasel, had its own story. The pictures of horses, dogs, hunting scenes, all added to her pleasure. In one corner was an old picture, faded, with a crack in the glass. It seemed strangely out of place to Redgold—and it was vaguely familiar!

"What is the group over there, Mr. Fitz-Warren? It looks like one that hung in my brother's room at home."

The picture was given her for inspection, and her heart throbbed with a new agony as she recognized the Cambridge eleven and her own dear brother Gorrie's face, smiling through the cracked glass.

"Why! Here is my dear brother, Gorrie."

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"Your brother! That is Lord Gordon Redman."

"Yes," answered Redgold, finding her voice again, "and my own dear brother, Gorrie."

There was a moment's intense silence, broken by Fitz-Warren: "Then Mrs. Ashley, you are Lady Redgold Redman?"

"I was, but now I am Mrs. Ashley. I think it much better to leave titles on the other side of the Atlantic."

Rising, with a courtly bow, he said: "I am pleased to know you are Lord Gordon's sister. We were chums at Magdalen. My hearth is honored to receive Mrs. Ashley."

"Gosh!" muttered "Stoney," "Lady who? My old roan is named Lady Billing, and she is one bit of ornery horse flesh."

"Stoney," gasped Vera, "will you never be impressed? Don't you understand that Mrs. Ashley is a titled lady?"

"So is my old roan," grumbled "Stoney." Then, in a more kindly voice: "Plain Mrs. Ashley is good enough for me."



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Redgold was filled with a new wonder as she dwelt on the strange workings of fate. Was it just chance that she had stumbled on that old picture of her brother in a Western ranch house, or was there an unseen hand guiding her destiny? Perhaps it was a sign that her brother would come again into her life. But how? That was the puzzle.

Back in Talton, she pondered on the Fitz-Warren situation: the English gentleman of her own kind, the squaw-wife and the half-caste, the little Vera. For a time she wondered what new sensation, what fresh shock this country held in store for her.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DRAMATIC CLUB

Uneasy, restless, after a weary night, Redgold strolled the hills, endeavoring to clear her mind. She faced the gale, her bright hair blown into locks and tendrils, her dress wrapped about her limbs. The wind came in gusts and carried a fleet of clouds overhead. Winter's chill was in the air.

She stood in the shelter of a cluster of brush and surveyed the scene. Down the hill was the road leading to town. The voices of children playing near the river came to her, their happy cries adding to her perverse mood. She found that perplexing discontent affecting her again. It had been coming over her in little waves, pressing itself against her good resolutions.

The cherished face of her brother, glimpsed in the old picture, brought back memories that she had hoped were dead. Now she was almost overcome with the great longing, the hunger for his companionship, his kindly voice, his

playful pats, their long rides over English lanes. So constantly was he in her thoughts that he seemed to hover about her. In imagination she heard his voice—there was the same quality in Fitz-Warren's—those deep, rich tones that always soothed her.

Caught in the web of these memories, her mind beat against the realities of life like a caged bird. Under normal conditions, she would have delighted in the wildness of the scene: the north wind sweeping through the hard stubble fields shaking the leafless branches, the leaden color of the sky, the warning gusts of dust and fallen leaves. But her mind was far from all within her vision. The color and warmth of her former life unrolled, arresting her with its remoteness. Picture after picture of what might have been passed before her. She saw herself the centre of a military group in India, the wife of a brilliant and dashing officer, surrounded by her own world, living the life into which she was born. In the general transfiguration Jack Travers appeared much like a demi-god. She called up rich scenes, bright hours.

Her mind sent the shuttle far and fast; it touched here, it touched there, and in its weav-

ing it caught the darker side. She was again a frightened, shivering girl in the old east wing of her father's home. The warmth and light and love were changed to cold and darkness and despair. There was left only pain and bitterness.

As she walked down the hill, the whole scheme of her life presented itself to her irritated brain as a tissue of disappointments. The sky was darkening. There were a number of people on the street. She stopped to chat with Canon Farleigh. How one's pulses stirred at his stories of the making of the West! The wild element, in those early days, soon knew that he was an "Oxford Blue."

Along the street she came upon the wife of a rancher in the foothills, seated in her buckboard. "We have twenty-seven miles to drive tonight, and over such roads!" the good lady told her.

The woman's calm bravery impressed her. These people appeared so satisfied, so solid. All the tragic things of life, even its petty disappointments, seemed remote to them. Why could she not take the trials as they accepted them?

She reached home, glad to be indoors from the cold. The gusty wind seemed to take pleasure in sweeping dust and bits of paper into corners and about fences, only to whisk them the next moment and distribute them on the road again.

Stirring the fire, she settled down; the fading light of the late autumn day soothed her. Her mind lapsed to an old book: Craig's "Ranching With Lord and Commons," a story of Western, pioneer cattlemen. There came a vision of the struggle and hardship of the wives who travelled untrodden trails with their husbands. There were sentences in the book that impressed her: "Our log-house of three rooms is nearly completed. The novelty of the life greatly counteracted the loneliness of the situation. Although there were no near neighbors and the nearest village was thirty miles, and neither church, school or post office, I do not think there was ever a feeling of loneliness."

"Thirty miles from a post office?" Redgold murmured. These first home-makers in the West took up life's duties far from friends, comforts, pleasures, with rare courage, fine optimism. They were home-loving women

who, at the call of duty, carried their ideas and ideals where needed. They were rich in achievement because they blended with the country. In comparison with the vicissitudes of those pioneers, life was easy for her.

She turned a searchlight on herself. She had never been disposed to make concessions; she usually acted on impulse; she was frequently unreasonable; she was as irritable as her husband was calm. There flashed into her mind a last unpleasant realization: she was idle. And there was in her a strange urge.

That was the debit side. On the credit side she placed the fact that she passionately wanted to escape defeat. Her thought turned to Fred. What an earnest effort he had made to conform to the ways of the new country! Well, she lived in dreams, and he in realities. Right now she could not dispel her dreams, see and understand all that he seemed to grasp. She felt like a child. She was quite conscious of Fred's determination to mould her into the life that he wanted her to live. For all his gentleness, Fred was a persistent mortal!

There came out of her self-determination a phase, a purpose that was to rule her future:

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she must blend with the country. This Western land seemed to issue a challenge, and when had a Redman failed to rise to a challenge? She was so energetically being sorry for herself that she had no time for the braver, finer things that the land offered. Why should she not make a supreme effort here? She had always been proud to take rank because of what her ancestors had done. She would be proud and take rank because of what she would do in her adopted land.

The days were growing shorter. The fall round-up on the ranches was under way. Drove of cattle were pouring down from the hills. Long files, in great clouds of dust, passed along the edge of the town. So close were some of their corrals and pens that Redgold was disturbed at night by the incessant crying of the young animals.

She flung herself desperately into work,

trying to atone for her former disloyalties. However, under ordinary conditions, routine care was all that she could give her house. Only by such fussing as her neighbor did could she make it fill her time. She wearied of reading the magazines, chafed under idle hours. In her determination to play the game, she wanted some new interest, some fresh activity. That desire became the refrain of all her plans and conversation.

While absorbed in it, the dramatic club in Talton was formed. In the vicinity was considerable talent. The young English ranchers rode, from even as far as forty miles, two and three nights a week for rehearsals and performances.

Fitz-Warren and Vera were energetic members. Under their persuasion, and from loyalty to her good resolutions, she joined. Her training in the dramatic school of art in England stood her in good stead. She appeared quite a seasoned performer, with a voice well controlled.

At last a local interest absorbed her. She accepted a place on the committee to pass judgment on plays. Gradually she began to love the work and found herself talking over



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the various offerings with Fred, surprised at the resource of his suggestion.

All the while she saw a good deal of the Fitz-Warrens. In the first play Fitz-Warren played the part of Redgold's old lover, and Vera was the illegitimate daughter.

"I love to see daddy's arms around you in the last act," Vera told her.

"That is sweet of you, Vera; but would you like me for a mother?"

"I would like it very much, if I did not have such a dear mother of my own."

What a loyal little soul, thought Redgold, as she drew an arm about the girl.

"I know daddy likes to make love to you. I can see by his face."

"Hush, dear. You must not say such things."

"What's she saying?" called Fitz-Warren.

"I was just telling Mrs. Ashley that I thought that you liked to make love to her in the play."

Fitz-Warren at once became the hero as he held out his arms and murmured: "My love!"

"I fear your 'Love' is failing you this time. It is evidently only in the play that she belongs to you."

"Now, Vera," said "Stoney," "don't set

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them to love-making. A little of that goes a long way."

Fred chaffed Redgold on her earnestness, but was delighted at her absorption. "You are looking so much better, dear," he said. "I think you are blossoming in your activities. Do not allow enthusiasm to make you over-work." She reminded him of Emerson's aphorism that nothing great was achieved without enthusiasm.

"What do you think I have done?" she cried, as she hurried into the house after a meeting of the play committee. "I have agreed to write a play. I think I must have had it in mind, for the plan swept over me at once. It is to be called the 'Homemakers.' I will portray the young English girl taking up life on the prairie. Do you think I can accomplish it?"

"Why not? There is nothing beyond you." Throwing an arm about her shoulder, he looked into her eyes. "You can do it, dear," he

said, with a ring in his voice. She thought then that dear old Fred never did fail her.

When she announced to her friends her intention of writing a play, "Stoney" appeared quite peeved. "Stick to your cooking, Mrs. Ashley," he advised.

"We can have some cooking in the play, as it centres around a brave young farm woman."

"I think I would make it a young man, Mrs. Ashley," suggested Fitz-Warren; "the young men were here first. When I came, over twenty years ago, there was not a white woman within a radius of fifty miles. In those days, if we had a party and wanted to dance, the men either danced with each other or persuaded a few Indian women to favor us with their presence."

"That gives me new ideas. I have the greatest respect for the boys who came out in the early days and made the best of things here."

Fitz-Warren sighed and answered: "I am

sure people never understood what it meant to so many of us, brought up in the softening luxury of beautiful homes, given a 'varsity education, meeting and mingling with the best of women, to be suddenly transplanted to a raw country. The things nearest the hearts of all well-bred men were scoffed at, the cultured voice was a detriment; the Englishman, generally, was held up to ridicule. Any trace of refinement brought out the jeers of the hard-boiled men of the West. There were no traditions, no conventions, no incentive for a high plane of living, only hard knocks that drove away our loftier ideals."

"Daddy, don't look so sad," cried Vera, as she stroked his bronzed cheek. "I never heard you speak like that before."

"It is women such as Mrs. Ashley who arouse these thoughts, dear."

"I fear you do not know me, Mr. Fitz-Warren; but you are gracious," laughed Redgold.

"You and Mr. Ashley mean a great deal to us," he very gravely answered.

"Be sure to have a cross-eyed broncho in that play, Mrs. Ashley," called "Stoney," who evidently thought the conversation a little sentimental.

"Oh, 'Stoney!' " grumbled Vera, who could not restrain a laugh. She always wanted to laugh at "Stoney's" terse remarks. "You spoil lovely thoughts every time."

"Is that so, Miss Vera? Well, it's better than trying to spoil lovely grub, as you do, when you try to cook."

The Christmas season came upon Redgold and her absorbing work. Writing and holiday preparation went on apace. One of the bachelors brought in a real English plum pudding, another, a box of holly. "Stoney's" offering was a turkey, a goose and a roast of beef. Vera and Redgold spent hours decorating the Christmas tree, cut in the woods near the Fitz-Warren home. Dinner at the Ashley's was at five o'clock. The shaded lamp cast a festive glow over the company, seated about a table, centered with a miniature pine tree. In no other part of the world, thought Redgold, could such a heterogeneous crowd,

in friendly contentment, assemble. There were the Englishmen, representatives of old families; the Indian woman, "Stoney," the American, a scarlet-coated policeman, a native of Denmark; a man from Edinburgh, a Frenchman from old Quebec, and "The Sheriff," a native-born son.

As they sat in happy abandon about the Christmas feast, Redgold's thoughts stole away to other Christmases, her last in her English home. She visioned the mellow candle-lighted table and her mother, so queenly and beautiful. She remembered, too, that her mother's gown was enhanced by Jack Travers' orchids.

As her thoughts wandered, she caught Fred's remark: "Time and environment make for such different conditions in Christmas celebrations."

"The Sheriff should tell us about his early Christmas festivities. He had interesting environment," added one of the ranchers. "Tell us about the Indian feasts on the reserve in the foothills."

"The day of those great feasts is gone," mused the Sheriff. "The first missionary introduced to the Indians the custom of

observing the Christmas feast. The bands assembled in large numbers. The settlers, as well, were there."

"What was the menu?" asked Fred.

"The old reliable pemmican, made of moose meat. There was, as well, sheep and goat meat."

"As the guest of the aborigines, you were obliged to partake of the good things?"

"Yes, or run the risk of offending 'Mine Host.'"

"The proper spirit of Christmas was very literally expressed by the Indians," continued the Sheriff. "The custom included much osculatory performance. Even the settlers did not escape."

"The best part followed?"

"Yes, when assembled in the old mission church for the settlers' annual community dinner: prairie chicken, roast wild goose, stuffed sucking pig, roast venison, and all the usual fancy dishes."

"What a feast!" cried Redgold.

"It was the great event of the year for the lonely settlers. Their lives were hard; they had few pleasures. When they did meet, they, unconsciously, accomplished something worth

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while. Many of the advantages we enjoy today found birth in the interchange of ideas, as those pioneers smoked their pipes and discussed the possibilities of this land."

It gave Fred food for thought. He was realizing that it is in such places, by such voices, that public opinion is formed; that it is so that men are lifted to eminence and parties carried to victory; that it is such small gatherings, in such new settlements, that rule the country, and are the fountain-heads of government of the New World.

Redgold dwelt on the pretty simplicities of life in those early days. She saw the land as more, much more, than a barren waste. People dreamed dreams and clung to the little things that spell life, with the same tenacity of purpose as in her English world. After all, she thought, these people were making orderly progress towards the realization of their ideals.



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The winter deepened. The "Homemakers," as a finished play, was presented. Most unexpected was its reception. Redgold was bewildered. The local touches, the clever sarcasm, the humor of the production delighted the people. There was a strong appeal in the struggles and disappointments of the cultured young Englishwoman who braved it out in the inhospitable country. The gift of ideality kept her sweet and serene and held her family together. When hope was almost gone, the birds sang, there was music in the soft breezes, and a peaceful fragrance, for her, in the field flowers. It was declared an epic of prairie life.

Redgold felt a sense of exaltation. The urge in her to write was so strong and so clear, the longing for expression which had stirred in her heart since childhood, so insistent.

Somewhat to her surprise, she began making those curious little personal discoveries that come with familiarity in any area: how certain parts of the river that crossed the plain, north of the town, reminded her of well-remembered spots in England; how the old log houses, homes of the early trappers or settlers, became glorified in the golden haze of association.

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The town, at first glance, looked deadly in winter: the long, unpainted, windowless curling rink; the roofless skating rink on the bleak prairie; the cleared spaces on the river for hockey. All appeared impossible settings for story or romance.

Yet the people of all classes, of all ages, did a day of honest toil that they might spend, at those places, an evening of pure, healthful joy.

The curling rink, with its tam-o'-shantered men sweeping before the sliding stones with their sturdy brooms, was a nightly scene of animation. The brightly-lighted skating rink, with its Chinese lanterns and a star-studded sky for a roof, became a fairyland. To the music of a wheezy gramophone, the rosy-cheeked girls and boys skated and laughed and sang till the last light was out.

Redgold saw this wide range of human interests that should inspire and direct her genius. The lonely voice of the West so often struck her with a chill of fear. But pictures of those youthful hockey players, those joyous skaters, those ardent curlers, their sport the very essence of Western life, a character-builder, warmed her frightened heart. She sensed the land's rugged charm, and a great

quietness fell upon her spirit.

During the following year her ideas took form in newspaper articles and sketches of Western life, and short romances with a local setting. She was on the highroad to new and rich interests.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PRIDE OF OWNERSHIP

During their fourth year in the West, Fred heard of a farm for sale, on a good government road, a few miles out of Talton and suitable for mixed farming.

"I have asked 'Stoney' to go out with us, tomorrow, to look it over. Fitz-Warren has promised to ride across to meet us," Fred told Redgold, as he came in, one early spring evening. "Should we buy the place, we will be near our good friends."

The men found the land good, but the buildings poor. The river, near by, ensured a good supply of water.

"I am glad you like the stables, Mr. Fitz-Warren," whispered Redgold. "Unfortunately, we cannot live in them."

Fred caught her low-toned remark. He was disappointed.

"I think I can improve the house very much with pretty chintz and dainty curtains," she added.

"Don't bother about rubbishy curtains, Mrs. Ashley," drawled "Stoney." Be sure to have a good cook stove. That is the important thing about a farm-house. Feed your help well, and they will work for you. When you are settled I will show you how to bake beans. With lots of beans and clean socks, a man can work twenty-four hours a day."

"To divert attention from the prospective culinary efforts of this farm-house to the beauties offered by nature, the scene from that western window, where the land slopes down to the spruce woods, will repay you for much that the house lacks," called Fred, eager to see Redgold satisfied.

The following day he had an earnest talk with "Stoney," whose business sense was keen, in spite of an apparent indifference to everything that he could not turn into a joke.

"Got to make a plunge sometime; never risk, never win," he declared. "Figuring it all around, it will fit you better than breaking the virgin prairie, and you'll pay a pile off the mortgage if you get a good crop this fall. I'd take a chance on it."

Fred and Redgold spent night after night in calculation. They had saved a little money.

They could obtain a mortgage. Thus they planned. They possessed health and ambition, as well as youth. They determined to buy the farm.

During the next few weeks the deal was accomplished. They were the owners of "Fairacres."

"I shall be able to see you every day now, Mrs. Ashley," chimed Vera, who had ridden over from Canyon View Ranch.

"That will be delightful. I shall expect you to show me all the beauty spots—where the periwinkle and the wild clematis bloom the thickest and where the orchids are."

"I will lead you to a spot in the forest that only I know about. There, the orchids bloom to perfection. Then you shall see my valley of blue-birds, and the glen where, each spring, I find the fawns. I know a place where real English buttercups bloom."

"Why, Vera, you know a garden of enchantment!"

"It is, if you look at it with nature-loving eyes. My dear mother has taught me to know and love the woods. If you are very good I will show you a tiny nest that looks as though built by the fairies. If you watch quietly, you will see the humming-bird, with its medley of colors, greens and blues and golden tints, flitting in and out, busily feeding its young."

"That sounds like India."

"Well, I can show you a typical English scene—the rabbits, in the summer evenings, playing in the meadows. I know you will love our catbirds. They are such curious little fellows, building their nests in the low-lying bush. As you pass they seem to say: 'My nest is not here!'

"They are clever. I know the trick of the wild duck, too, in leading the hunter away from its nest by pretence of being wounded."

"And the little gophers, so numerous on the prairie trails?"

"I have noticed how pretty the baby gophers are. They play tag with each other. Oh, Vera, we shall have some marvellous times!"

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In March a "Chinook," that southwest wind that is known as the Pacific zephyr, blew warm over the land. It came with a dull roar, changing the temperature in a few hours. As though a miracle had been wrought, the country was clear of snow, streams were running along the road, the land was bathed in sunlight. The frost began to thaw out of the ground, and teams were pulling disc and harrow into the fields, preparatory to an early seeding.

It was one of those clear spring mornings that fill one's heart with hope. Fred and his man stood by their teams, ready to drive the first furrow. A warm breeze from the west sent a spring song over the new grasses. The prairie, to the north and east, was dappled with moving shadows by the foamy clouds. The straws had been burned off the fields and the grasses, growing and decaying for centuries, had mingled with the rich alluvial left by an inland sea which covered the prairie when the world was young. Nature works slowly in the storing of her latent wealth, against the time when harvest bounties are garnered.

Fred leaned on the plow handles, a smile on



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his handsome face. Redgold went out to see the turning of the first sod. "We should have some form of ceremonial, a pouring of wine, to bless our broad acres. Ceres and Prosperine must wave their magic wands."

"I feel their magic," Fred replied. "I feel like a king, at last working my own land."

With a gentle swish and crackle of half-burned stubble, he was away. In the soft curl of the rich, black earth, he seemed to hear his father's voice, reading the morning lesson: "And preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so as, in due season, we may enjoy them."

The speeding spring made heavy demands upon the workers. Each day they toiled until the light faded and the stars twinkled over the prairie. The air was filled with the beat of wings as, legion by legion, the wild fowl came up from the south and passed on to their northern feeding grounds. Some rested by the way. For weeks, every slough was dotted with

their plumage.

Fred, with his experience in farming, seeded lightly and deep, a precautionary measure against a dry year. Some days were too wet for sowing. He chafed at the delay. Another difficulty faced him: the seed wheat gave out. But a kindly neighbor came to the rescue. Fred learned that the brotherhood of man was well expressed in Western neighborliness.

There were much the same daily tasks at "Fairacres" until the men had drilled in the grain. Redgold was engrossed in her domestic and culinary duties. Mind and body alike were exhausted at the end of a day. One of the many things that surprised her was that she seemed to need less sleep, for all her hard work, than in Talton. On the Hunter farm she did not sleep, at times, because of her worry and discontent. Now she fell into dreamless sleep, almost as her head touched the pillow. But she found herself waking, often before dawn, and lying, wide-eyed, ere Fred had stirred.

She learned all of the morning sounds—the yapping, moaning howl of the coyote, which, in the distance, reminded her of the jackal of India. These gave way to the sweeter sounds

of the first linnet, as it trilled forth its silvery notes. From the farm yard came a medley of sounds.

A soft sighing in the spruce trees, the tuneful, drowsy cry of sleepy birdlings, spoke of a new day. From the branches, the robin poured forth its song, and soon came the more lovely notes of the meadow lark.

The mists of the night, reluctant to leave the beauty spots, hovered in a purple veil over the valley and woodland and prairie. The dew glistened on the flowers. How she loved this first morning hour! Quickly dressing, she hurried downstairs to see the sun appear—in Homer's line: "The Daughter of Dawn stretched forth her roseate fingers."

To the west there burst upon her the full glory of morning on the snow-crested peaks. Insignificant she felt as she gazed on the wondrous scene and knew the very presence of an all-wise Creator. How petty her grievances, how small her disappointments, how short her life compared to the eternity of mountains! She worried over little matters as though her life were eternal. What did it matter if she did hit upon rocks? She was but a creature of this earth for a short time and would pass,

leaving not a ripple on the river of life.

These early morning musings sweetened and uplifted her. Beauty for her lightened labor. It was on such days, as early morning brought her joy, that she sang at her work. Fred caught, from the warm kitchen, snatches of song, and he sensed for her a new outlook. He knew she was developing.

He was surprised at her adaptability and courage, appreciating that she was facing a serious problem in adjustment when she assumed the role of farm woman.

A flush of emerald crept across the fields. The air grew warmer every day, while the wheat grew taller. It was early summer. The sun had an almost tropical intensity.

On a day when all nature seemed drowsy, Redgold sought the hammock under shady trees. Breaking in on her reverie came a voice, soft and musical. It was the Indian woman, Mrs. Fitz-Warren, who had trudged through the heat from her home. She bore a gift, the first wild strawberries. As Redgold admired and tasted them, she realized the hours that had been spent in the back-breaking occupation of picking them.

Taking the brown hands in hers, she said:

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"You are very kind, Mrs. Fitz-Warren."

"You are good to my little white fawn. You are my friend," answered the woman of few words.

It was time for haying. In the waves of intense heat the clouds of mosquitoes, that buzzed around the haymakers, seemed like another plague of Egypt.

Redgold went about her work with a strange absorption. She was learning how difficult it is to keep in touch with outside life. Though her days were filled, she sought to engage in community effort, welcoming newcomers, giving a helping hand.

The harvest was close at hand. There was neither drought nor untimely frost. Billowing waves of golden wheat spread out on the "Fairacres" fields, silvery barley and thick oats.

In the early evening, Fred and Redgold would walk down through the fields. They talked little at such times, too conscious were

they, amid the ripening grain, of that strained sense of expectancy of harvest returns. They, mentally, had the grain cut and in the elevator ere it had ripened.

When the harvest moon hung above, they would saunter out, intent on their promising acres and listening to the soft hum of night sounds. They were awed, one night, by a rare nature picture, a field of sunflowers in the moonlight. The stately golden flowers, no longer commonplace, seemed part of a magic garden.

Night after night they gazed upon the radiant scene. Redgold felt that eternal peace of beauty steal into her soul. The imagery of Clytie, of Greek mythology, came to her. She visioned the fair young maiden watching Apollo's journey from east to west, yet never winning favor in his eyes. The gods, in pity, changed her into a sunflower. In the altered guise she remained a fit emblem to constancy.

Enraptured, Redgold ran riot with poetic quotations. To keep pace, Fred quite amazed her by his apt offering from Moore:

"No heart that has truly lov'd ever forgets,  
But as truly loves on to the close,  
As the sunflower turns on her god when he sets,  
The same look which she turn'd when he rose."

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Before the grain was cut there was hail. It made an eccentric course over the country, beating down the tall grain, sweeping over one corner of "Fairacres." After the storm had ceased, Fred and Redgold made a tour of the fields. When they were sure that most of their crop was saved, they confessed the extremity of their fears. They had not dared speak while the storm was raging, and even after spoke in undertones of their good fortune.

The grain was ripe in mid-August. The binders piled up a splendid crop. In serried ranks stretched the wheat stooks. Across the prairie, many miles away, but quite distinct in the rarefied air, the smoke of threshers hung above the horizon. Sound carries far in the prairie country. When "Fairacres" vibrated with its hum, others, whose harvests were garnered, came, out of good-will, to give a helping hand.

They had fine loads of grain for the elevators, not quite what they had anticipated,

yet fairly satisfactory. Then came into Redgold's life one of the real flashes of sunlight. On her birthday Fred presented a beautiful chestnut mare. To ride again!—not the scented English lanes, but prairie trails.

"'Day-Dream' has a good mouth, and can turn on a sixpence," Fred said. "She was born in an English racing stable, the granddaughter of a Derby winner."

Fred observed the intense satisfaction with which Redgold followed the graceful strides of her new horse. He realized that contentment for her lay in recreating, as much as possible, her out-of-door life in England.

She was in the saddle every spare hour. In the evenings, she would mount "Day-Dream" and ride off into her own little world. This was her wonder hour. She could call from the past any companion she wished to ride beside her. Sometimes she conjured up distant scenes—a pathway through the fragrant magnolias of India, or the flower-bordered lanes of England. Ahead of her would flit the little prairie linnets—"mouse-birds," she called them.

The Indian reservation was her favorite haunt. After several weeks of riding past



their homes, she appreciated how quiet and respectful were the Indians. Little Sitting Weasel, an Indian boy, began to look for her each evening. If he were quick enough to reach the gate into the reservation, ere she dismounted, he would open for her and receive the usual sweets.

One evening Sitting Weasel had a rival—a larger boy opened the gate. Nothing daunted, the small lad waved Redgold back. Very solemnly he closed it, and, with a broad smile, opened again for his "White Flame," as the Indians had named her.

The little lad's energy was a source of amusement to his indolent father, old "Rainbow." Quite a character was this father and a personage among the Indians, as the finest trapper on the reserve. Summer was his holiday time, when he appeared to like his pipe and an easy chair.

Then Redgold missed little Sitting Weasel from the gate. She learned that he was very ill.

"Come and see little boy; him very sick," said old "Rainbow."

The squaw-mother, seated on the ground, held the child in her arms, a look of anguish

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on her face. In one corner of the place was a pile of blankets and skins. Redgold persuaded the squaw to lay her precious burden there.

Then began a struggle for the life of the boy. Redgold worked through the long night watches, ministering to him, gently sponging the frail little body to keep down the fever. The worn-out mother sat outside, her head buried in her hands. She made no outcry. The Indians know how to suffer in silence. When the fever had passed and the lad slept, Redgold went out to the mother. "He will not die," she said. The sudden change on the stoical Indian face, that as quickly vanished, revealed the mother heart. There is no color line in mother feeling. After a pause the Indian woman murmured: "White woman good."

Thus Redgold made of those Indians friends for life. Old "Rainbow" felt that she had saved his son's life, and it awakened that strange and lasting sense of Indian gratitude. Through succeeding and lonely years, the Indians on that reserve were staunch friends in every situation.

Thus the possession of "Day-Dream" gave her opportunity to win a loyal service as well

as study a fast-passing race.

She was enabled, as well, to enjoy a new form of entertainment—a coyote hunt. So resolutely had she turned from even the thought of again indulging in the hunt, that the prospect left her breathless. She even dreamed of it—of horses and hounds and pink coats and many kinds of hunted animals. It was in England, then in Canada, and again in strange lands. But, always, she was riding hard after the hunted animal.

At Canyon View Ranch the riders assembled, neighboring farmers and ranchers, on every conceivable type of horse, even to the little Indian cayuse. The men and women were all good riders, but thought of following the ideas of a formal hunt was far from their minds. A few hours of good sport was all they desired; rules and riding garb and equipment were not important. "On with the dance" was the only concern.

The meet was on a day that throws a spell over the lover of the outdoors. The sky was bluer than ever, the wind softer.

They were finally away, riders and dogs, winding in and out through small stretches of sun-flecked woods, and over the fields. The

long-legged, tawny-colored hounds, racing ahead, made a colorful picture, quite like an old English print.

On they rode, into the foothills, over undulating country, up hill, down dale, through patches of sage-brush, over the stones, across an occasional stream. Finally the much-sought animal was sighted. On the round of a knoll, silhouetted against the clear blue sky, stood a coyote. He spied the dogs before they saw him. There he stood, his "general, slinking expression" evident, even at a distance.

Redgold was familiar with his sharp, vicious bark, but she had never seen the ravenous creature. On the hill he lingered, true to Mark Twain's description: "A long, sick-and-sorry looking skeleton with a grey wolf skin stretched over it, a tolerably bushy tail that forever sags."

The dogs discovered him. With a mad rush and great barks, fleet-footed, they were after him. The coyote, away to the sage-brush, head slightly depressed, struck a regular, easy swinging gait, so easy, it seemed no exertion to him. Now and again, carelessly, he cast an eye over his shoulder, plainly, more in curiosity than interest. On he travelled, at a pace

so comfortable, so enticing to his pursuers, that the swift-moving form became almost indistinguishable from the sage-brush.

Redgold was experiencing a new and thrilling insight into Western life. The hunt seemed a "free-for-all," with no apparent rules to the game. The coyote-hound, hunted on sight, was so different to the fox-hound of England, who hunts by scent.

The animal, rushing on, would turn, never ceasing to smile, as though he said: "Come along, come along; you can do better." "A thoroughly vagabond outcast in grey," the creature has speed. He gave them a fine race. On! On! Smiling coyote, panting dogs, eager riders, clouds of dust, now gaining, now losing on the trail of "an unusually long-winded streak of lightning."

The dogs seemed to take up the challenge and pressed on, sides heaving, in the dust and cracking brush and flying stones. The riders strove to keep touch; one by one the slower-paced and heavier mounts fell behind, and the whole hunt straggled like a comet: the coyote the head, the dogs and hunters the tail. And the course of the coyote was just as erratic as that of any comet.

The river is reached. Over, almost in a bound, goes the long, slim coyote. The dogs, hot on the trail, pause, just an instant, then into the stream. Hot, breathless, they rush up the bank, shaggy coats dripping. Away they run, slower now with the extra weight and with less dust, as if they feel that the stream ends their chances. They appear to have lost heart, as if they know they are under a handicap.

After a few hundred yards of further effort, they evidently realize that the chase is hopeless. By a process of canine mental telepathy, almost in the same moment, they abandon pursuit.

Just then the coyote, turning a little in his tracks, shoots a rapid glance behind. He sees the confusion of his enemy, and, with a look, half of joy and half of pride, can almost be heard to say: "Try it again some day! I know a place where there is a broader stream."

He, however, seems striving to break a record. Having really got his speed, he is either unwilling or unable to slacken. The last the hunters see of him is just an instantaneous flash as he shoots the crest of a knoll a couple of miles away.

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Having ridden goods jumps in the old land, she prepared to clear the stream when she spied the returning dogs. Fitz-Warren, almost on the same instant, drew up just at the water's edge.

"Too bad!" he said.

"I like you coyote, anyway," she answered. "I admire anything that excels in his own line, and I am glad we didn't get him."

"Well, we've lost the day."

"I don't think we measure it that way. We have won the day, for we played the game. Some time we should arrange to send coyotes to England. They would certainly show our self-opinionated fox-hounds what speed really is, and even some of our hunters."

## CHAPTER VII

### CATHERINE FLEMING

The Sackville races of the following week were a popular autumn attraction of the district. In the colorful, moving scene, in the people, with their merriment, their exhilaration, their freedom, Redgold sensed that pulse of life peculiar to the West. In it she was now a part. With more definite perceptions, she was better able to appreciate the picture—pioneers, cowboys, cowgirls, cattle barons, agriculturists, Indians, Chinamen, Japanese, Mounted Police. She could not resist musing on her ideas, even amid the turmoil of the celebration, seeing them take form in the sunny land.

There was a satisfaction in feeling that she belonged. She was able to chat, in easy familiarity, with the people. Many of the women, in the riding skirts of the country, or in breeches and coat, were away from their farms and hard work for a day. For them "the hillside's dew-pearled."



Her loyal friends, the Indians, were much in evidence. They were dignified in gorgeous trappings; the squaws, usually with papooses strapped to their backs, bizarre in their vivid greens or scarlets or pinks. The Indian pony races, always a part of the sporting events, from their very novelty, aroused the gambling spirit, even in Fred. The young bucks, in ordinary clothes, ride bareback, without colors, without weighing in, carrying a little switch in hand. Out to win, the Indian cannot be bought to hold up his horse. It is impossible to follow favorites, as there are no numbers; but each rides "hell-for-leather" around the course.

Interest, however, focussed on the race for the three-year-olds, of which Fitz-Warren's filly, "Silver-Wings," bred in the district, was the favorite. After a neck-and-neck race with an Eastern horse, to within a few feet of the winning post, "Silver-Wings" leaped ahead and won. It appeared that the honor of the district had been at stake in the excitement of the crowd.

All the while small boys jostled about, crying their wares: "Popcorn, chewing gum, ice-cold drinks, peanuts." The encircling hills

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were clad in their autumn beauties of crimson and gold. The sunset had just reached the wonderful height of its coloring—pink and mauve and rosy afterglow. Everything had a rich rose and gold stain. The foothills rolled, clear and mellow in the softly radiant light.

In the interval before the last race, Fitz-Warren sought Redgold. "A lady at the racing stable wishes to see you—an English lady, an artist, who keeps thoroughbred horses. She saw you, and feels sure she knows you. We are to find her in a loose-box. She is quite a character."

Another touch with England! They came upon the lady talking to her jockey. It was the Honorable Catherine Fleming, Redgold's girlhood chum.

"I feel as if I must be dreaming," Redgold murmured. There was something tense about each, in their restrained surprise.

"To think I should find you here," Catherine said, "after you have been lost to our world so long. You have been away about four years?"

"About that. How long have you been here?"

"I came last spring."

"To think that you should be the C. Flem-

ing who sells thoroughbred horses! I have noted the name, and thought it that of a man."

"And you are the wife of Fred Ashley! I never connected you with him, though I did hear that he had a wife with a crown of red-gold hair. Why in the world did you come out here?"

"Oh, you must know all about me, Catherine. You all jumped at conclusions."

"Well, I suppose you had enough pluck to marry the man you loved—but did you love him, Redgold? Did you not marry him in a fit of pique? I heard that you did."

"I'm sure that you heard a good deal. Why did you not marry Captain Edgar?"

"I did not have the opportunity. I was a fool, of course. Everyone knew he was playing with me."

"Oh, Cathie, I think he loved you; but those butterfly women so flattered him that he was carried away by it all."

"Well, life is its own lesson. That is why I am out here. Now, my only loves are my painting and my horses."

They talked eagerly, each hungry for news of the other.

"Our race is called," said the jockey.

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The old friends parted. Honorable Catherine Fleming promised to spend the following Sunday with the Ashleys.

Catherine arrived early on Sunday. Standing beside her dark, pawing horse, in khaki breeches, beaded buckskin shirt, cowboy hat, prairie boots, she seemed the embodiment of the West. Time had dealt kindly with her, Redgold thought, even if she had a grievance against the world.

The two women smiled with pure joy. A soft swirl of feeling enfolded them as they dwelt on the mystery of their meeting.

"Do you remember regatta week at Henley-on-Thames, when we had our fortunes told?" asked Redgold.

"By the gypsy woman?"

"Yes; we were to meet far from England and under new and strange circumstances. Her prophecy appears to have come true."

"Life has cut up some strange capers since those carefree days."

"It has. I am glad my outlook is changing

and I can accept conditions."

"Our situations widely differ. I am alone. I have few pleasant memories. There are many things that I may, with impunity, forget. A woman must believe that a man has something superior about him, if it is only his wickedness. I have not even that compensation. I don't demand perfection, not a bit, but I do ask that a man's faults should not be contemptible ones." Catherine paused a moment, her face very hard. Then, with a sudden transition: "Let me tell you of my ranch. It is away up in the foothills, two thousand acres. I purchased it last year, in England, from Cousin David. You remember he ranched here for several years? My house is on the slope of a hill, beside a mountain stream. I built a small, rustic cabin, in among the pines, for a studio."

"A rustic log studio, in a setting of pines, in the heart of the hills and looking out on snow-capped mountains! That seems the fond realization of an artist's dream."

"It is! I love the isolated beauty of the place. I came to study and paint the animals of the mid-west. Did you know I took a course in animal anatomy at the veterinary college of London? It has better fitted me for my work."

"You should be happy, Cathie, in that you can follow your inclinations; and what is more satisfying?"

"Yes, yet it seems that I am continually in quest of something that I never quite obtain. Is it the blue-bird of happiness?"

They sauntered about the garden. Finally Redgold said: "Come in and see our home."

"Well, my dear, you are in pleasant surroundings. I like your husband, and think he is a real man. The impression made by his speech in the school has never left me. If more of the settlers had his fine appreciation of good roads, with the educational advantages they give, we would have a better life in this country."

Presently lunch was served.

"The local wireless information bureau must have been out of order," said Fred to Catherine, "or we would have known before this that you were here."

"My wireless was working, but it did not tell me quite enough. To think that I did not know, all these months, that my dear old Redgold was so near!"

Suddenly turning to Redgold, she asked:

"Do you write? I remember hearing that Mr. Ashley's wife was writing sketches of Western life."

Of course, Fred gave the information. Then she found that Redgold knew a surprising amount of the history and geography of the country.

"My dear girl, you have not been standing still. No wonder you are happy here! We have a common task—to create. You must come into the foothills. We will roam the trails, and write and sketch and paint. You know we are happiest in this queer old world when we create."

With a strange sense of uplift, Redgold let the words and the pictures and the thought of companionship with her old friend sink into her soul. When Catherine told her that she was portraying on canvas the life of the pioneers, and collecting their stories, a vista of future joys were unfolded.

Fred was very indulgent to their plans.

"Your ideas, if not fanciful, are at least lofty. When a person feels intensely, artistic expression is frequently the result."

"You would expect that expression here. These broad prairies and foothills and moun-

tains have a charm that cannot fail to stir the soul of an artist," Catherine answered.

"Those efforts come from dreams in the heart," Redgold murmured, "and only that which has been founded on dreams has survived."

"Redgold never wearies of weaving quotations about those dreams in the heart. The prairies are redolent for her with poetic associations."

"I think Fred is weary of hearing my frequent allusions."

"Today it was Bryant's 'October.' Quote the lines, dear."

"'Ay, thou art welcome, heaven's delicious breath,  
When woods begin to wear the crimson leaf,  
And suns grow meek, and the meek suns grow brief.'"

"October is a wonder month on the prairie, with its carnival of color," Catherine continued. "I was thinking, as I rode down today, of what a mystery our mid-west prairies are."

"No such prairies were or are to be found anywhere else in the world," Fred replied. "There are deserts and steppes and pampas and llanos elsewhere, but no great stretches of waving grass and small trees and field flowers."

The conversation drifted; they discussed a



number of things: the horse industry, the destruction of game by the Indians, the menace of prairie fires.

"One of my neighbors," said Catherine, "went into the hills to hunt deer. He started into the brush country on the opening day of the season and soon met the Indians. They told him there were fifty in the party, hunting in a long drive, with one man every fifty yards."

"The game wardens," Fred answered, "are taking stringent measures to prevent this wholesale slaughter. It is bad practice in a new country; the deer will meet the fate of the buffalo."

"Think what the country is suffering through prairie fires," added Redgold. "It means the extermination of more than the game."

"That reminds me," broke in Fred, "of a story of our good 'Stoney.'"

"That is your quaint friend, Redgold? Has he done something heroic?"

"He is always doing something fine, Catherine. He is just the type you will like—a real man. Tell us, Fred."

"A fierce fire raged in the south country.

The men on one of the big ranches were fighting desperately to save a big stretch of pasture. They ploughed and dug and finally had it entirely protected, save the side of a big hill. This was considered unsurmountable. No cowboy had ever ridden up the steep incline. The red tongues of fire were coming closer and closer, and the hill was the open pathway to the valued tract.

"'Stoney' happened to be there. He took a team of heavy horses that were harnessed to a plough and faced them up the hill. The plough-shares cut the sod; the speed of the plunging horses threw clods of earth for yards; the great animals strained on the drag as they faced that sheer grade and set their big feet for the surging, heavy struggle of the climb. Urged by the yelling, driving 'Stoney,' they cut a clean furrow from top to bottom, and saved the grass."

"Dear old 'Stoney,'" cried Redgold; "that is just like him."

"Bravo!" chimed Catherine. "These tales of Western pluck are what I like."

"You should hear the cowboys from the south country tell that story. For once they were impressed."

"The cowboys are a fine class, as men go," offered Catherine, who usually had the last word. "They, at least, ring true."

## CHAPTER VIII

### INTIMATE TALK

After luncheon the two friends drifted into intimate talk.

"I wish Jack Travers would come out," said Catherine, in her abrupt way. "I was so fond of him, and we had the same hobby—painting."

Redgold was silent. Jack's name had been in her heart, but never on her lips, since she left England.

"I believe you still think of him, Redgold. Why did you not marry him? He was such a splendid looking chap, and everyone thought you an ideal couple."

"I can never tell you the cause of our break, Cathie. Don't ask me."

"There were strange tales about you, in our world. Did you know that Jack was very ill in India? It was rumored that he had come to this country seeking health; others said seeking you."

"Redgold sat very still. She asked herself:

"If Jack Travers had come to her, especially in those first bitter days—what then?"

Catherine continued: "Do tell, whatever happened?"

"I had to leave home after I broke with Jack. My family combined to make my life unendurable. They did not know the reason of my action, and probably never will. Possibly my mother suspected it. Father was terrible in his wrath. He even said that I had not run true to blood, had not lived up to the family traditions. Brother Gorrie was the only one who was kind to me; but, though he urged me, I could not tell him."

"I remember hearing of your Aunt Ellen's wrath."

"Then you will not wonder that she was called 'The Dragon.' Father made me a prisoner in my room. Aunt Ellen came there to talk, and left me crushed and broken. I got to a state of mind that it seemed I had committed some terrible sin, with all of the family insisting that I had. There was a sinner in the family, but not I. For a while I was beaten down and stunned. They all knew I was hiding something. I was a sad victim of circumstances."

Redgold paused, lost in the horror of those dark days. Across the autumn-tinted hills, that swept up to the darker mountains, the sunlight gleamed in long, slanting rays. It played like fire on her hair.

"You poor dear," murmured Catherine.

"If someone had said that to me during those lonely days, it would have meant much to me. While shut in my room, I could not eat the food that was brought to me. The family were wearing down my will-power, and I feared that I might not be able to keep my secret. Yet I was too much of a Redman to tell what I had discovered. It was terrible to suffer the injustice to which I was subjected. I became so ill that the family doctor was called. At first he was inclined to treat my condition lightly: 'an affair of the heart,' he said. He finally realized that I was in some tragic situation. I told him I had to leave home and earn my living, and that he was the only one to whom I could appeal for help. Mother was very ill at the time. Father thought I was the cause of that, and was planning to send me away for some months to Aunt Ellen's. The whole circumstance gave me the opportunity to leave home."

"During all this time, even when you were engaged to Jack, you knew and were friends with Fred?"

"Our friendship remained unbroken through my school years. I saw him occasionally. He never allowed me to forget him. When Jack dominated the scene, Fred ceased for a time in his attentions. Even then he told me that I would some day call him, and I did."

"What happened after you left home?"

"I worked in London. My family completely ignored me. I hope, Cathie, that you may never know the great loneliness that I endured."

"You returned home at the time of your mother's death?"

"Aunt Ellen wired me, without father's knowledge. It was at mother's death-bed that he first saw me. Yet, even in the presence of the grim reaper, he did not soften. He left the room and sent back a cruel message: that I leave the house at once, as I was the cause of mother's death. Imagine, Cathie! If they had only known the truth!"

For the first time, Redgold's voice broke. She sat for a while, hot tears on her cheeks.

"Weep, my dear. It will do you good."

Catherine threw an arm around her. "Why did you not tell them the cause of your action? I cannot understand you. What an unnecessary martyr you appear to have made of yourself!"

"I could not, Cathie. You can never understand. I had to keep silent. I immediately left home, walking to the station. It was early morning and the air was full of bird song. The birds seemed to vie with each other in making sweet melody for me. At the lodge gate I picked a few primroses, and that flower will ever have poignant memories for me. I read in the London papers the following day of mother's death."

"What a tragic time you did have!"

"I was just a little more crushed after the experience."

"But you still had Fred? There is nothing like propinquity, my dear."

"I also saw Jack Travers. He came into my life again. Gorrie and he found me. Jack was determined that I should marry him and go to India. He vowed that he would not return without me. He and Gorrie set about with such persistence to win me over to their plans."



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"You would not bury past offences and go with him? You were a foolish girl."

Redgold shuddered. "He almost broke my will, with his kindness, his adoration, his pleading. But I thought of mother's grave. I was sorry for him. There was much written in his face. I knew he had suffered deeply. When I was with him, I would almost yield. Then would follow a night of anguish. I was again a frightened, horrified girl, and knew that I could not be his wife."

She sat very still, her face hard. Catherine, aware of thoughts beyond her reach, walked to the western windows. She suddenly turned to Redgold: "Why don't you tell me the whole story? You will feel better."

"Wait till I'm done! All this time Fred was just as persistent. He was so wise, so good. I trusted him. I knew that Jack could not be trusted. Fred stood the test in every way. My admiration for him grew. When he urged, what could I do?"

"I expect you were growing to care for him, Redgold. He is quite the type you could care for, that you could fall in love with."

"I appreciated the calm he seemed to give me. Indeed he was a refuge for me, for the

pressure on me became greater. Gorrie had all the plans made for my marriage with Jack. He needed only the consent of the prospective bride."

"That was rather important."

"Jack constantly sought me, and pleaded and promised and insisted that I marry him at once. All the while Fred's quiet urging continued. I was almost desperate. Then I had a bitter argument with Gorrie and his attempt to force me into marriage. I was frightened, too, terrified by a future with Jack that unrolled before me. What nights of anguish I endured! I feared that they might break my will. In my desperation I agreed to marry Fred at once and to go to America. I can't tell you the relief I felt when I finally settled the matter."

"My dear child, you have certainly been through the mill. I cannot help but feel sorry for Jack."

"I sent him out of my life for the second time. I think he came to realize that life had so shaped itself for us through his own acts. He made me promise that, if I ever needed him, I would let him know. I often wonder if I ever shall see him or hear from him again."

"Then came your marriage with Fred?"

"We had to hurry it for fear of Gorrie. We knew he would try to prevent it. The day was one of pouring rain. It seemed as if all London were weeping. We drove across the city to a tiny church in a very suburban part. To our horror, the minister was not there. After waiting what seemed hours, we sent a verger for him. Finally our parson ran, frantically, down the aisle, donning his surplus. Out of breath, he exclaimed: 'There is just time!' In those days, marriages were not legal after three o'clock in the afternoon."

"Oh, dear," cried Catherine, "you must have been distracted. A dreary, rainy day, and no clergyman!"

"I wondered if fate were intervening again to hinder my marriage. We had three minutes to get through the legal part, and had the prayers afterwards."

"When your family found out that you were married and away to America, they were furious. I heard that your father feared that it might not be legal, and was at pains to find out. So you have braved it through. I think you are a brick."

"I can't deny that it has been hard, Cathie. There is still an ache in my heart. But I have learned to look upon those dark events as a closed chapter in my life. I turned my back on England and its associations. Strange lands, and especially this land, held alluring promise. I wanted a country where people were not wrapped up in convention, where they were of a little broader gauge. I wanted to make a fresh start."

"It seems that in any situation there is a ray of hope."

"I almost lost hope for a time. I had to fight to retain any of my ideals. But I gradually braced up in new surroundings. My husband becomes more worthwhile, the longer I live with him. He is developing—and perhaps I am, too. That is one advantage of this Western land—people are what they make of themselves. There is no goal out of their reach."

The girls sat in silence, each lost in thought. Finally Redgold said: "Let us talk of something else. This is not healthy conversation for me. Did you say that you were painting some oldtime Western scenes?"

"I have been talking with the old-timers in

our district, endeavouring to visualize the life of the pioneers. My first picture is 'The Last Sundance at Blackfeet Crossing.' You know the spot?—where the warlike Blackfeet forded the ~~river~~. There, many bloody battles were fought. It is historic ground, the place where the famous Indian Treaty, number seven, known as the Blackfeet Indian Treaty, was consummated."

"We will join forces, Cathie."

"Good! This is not a land without traditions."

"Almost every farm has its traditions. We came upon a deserted farm, and over the door of the sod house was a family crest and the name, 'Belearmina Castle.' The place had been occupied by bachelors. The tale goes that their first stove in the 'castle' was an inverted tin washtub, with an opening to insert a pipe, and a fire built on the ground underneath. Think of the ingenuity!"

"Such stories should be published in England."

"I want England to know this land. As some one has said: 'To ride with the picturesque cowboy, to feel the heat and dust, to march with the dignified Indians, to follow the

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pioneer in his Empire-building undertakings."

"I want you and Redgold to come up to my ranch next week for duck shooting," Catherine told Fred. "The sloughs are teeming with ducks. Last night I heard a flock of wild geese go over, and they seemed to light near one of our lakes."

"Grand! I hope you've got the geese."

"But it will try your patience, Fred," cried Redgold. "Don't you remember last year? You crawled a mile to get near some geese. They saw you first and cleared away before you had 'drawn a bead.' Oh, but you were sore and disappointed!"

It was a dark morning when the shooters from the Foothill ranch assembled. There was a drizzle of rain, yet not enough to dampen their ardor. Reaching the appointed place, they crept cautiously to the edge of the slough, not making a sound.

Catherine and Fred went to the far side of the water, leaving Redgold the doubtful honor

of firing to drive the ducks over the other guns. What an eternity it seemed to them, kneeling on the damp ground. The first streak of dawn finally stole across the sky, and soon the air was alive with the birds.

It was a hunter's paradise—the fusilade of guns, the birds dropping, the dogs working like mad. The lust to kill was on. They went to a larger slough, where it took all their skill to bring down more birds as the flock remained in the centre.

Then came the thrill of the day; the weird honk, honk of wild geese. Speedily digging themselves in, they waited in cramped positions, nerves tingling, guns loaded, ready for immediate action. The first flock alighted near them. Then three guns banged, and the dogs were madly retrieving.

It was a damp but happy party that filled Lady Catherine's car on the return journey. The back seat was laden with geese and ducks, two large dogs, three guns, and Catherine Fleming perched on an old game bag.

"Can you imagine this in England—the Honorable Catherine Fleming of Lantrem Castle reclining on a heap of dead geese and ducks?" Redgold asked.

"Oh, don't compare the sport of the English woods, where you have twenty village boys and men acting as beaters."

"And the gamekeepers to reload and carry your guns."

"And sit behind a barricade and have the poor, frightened little hares driven up for you to shoot."

About the broad fireplace, with its merry crackle of pine logs, the weary hunters discussed sport in general.

"The Hungarian partridge is one of the swiftest birds in flight," Catherine declared.

"I remember my first partridge shoot. I was giving the birds the chance a British sportsman does—shooting only when they were well on the wing. Of course, they were right out of range before I could pull the trigger."

"Not so with spruce partridge," Redgold laughed. "I saw one on a branch, and, to give it a sporting chance, I threw a stick at it, but it did not move. Then I fired and missed,



so decided it should live a little longer."

"The way you shot the deer!" chuckled Fred.

"Now, Fred. Since you take such pleasure in references to that, you had better tell Cathie."

"On our last shooting trip in the forest reservation I had diligently sought deer all day, leaving Redgold snugly tucked behind a barricade of boughs. At last, sighting two deer, I drove them down."

"Did she shoot them?"

"No! When I asked her why, she answered: 'They were so sweet and graceful. I could not kill them.'"

"What did you say?"

"Well, I said a good deal."

"Don't tell her what you said, Fred," Redgold cried, springing up. "I know he will if we stay here. I'm anxious to see your pictures." And she grasped Catherine's arm and hurried her away.

About the walls of Catherine's studio were various types of art: an Indian in war dress, scenes in the mountains, a soft-eyed deer, a mountain goat. Redgold noticed one work; a broken bowl filled with wild flowers. She

was especially attracted by its purity of color.

"I like that." She felt herself suddenly weakening to memories. All that she had put in the back of her mind came forward, as she murmured of the pictures. "It is very broad, very sure, very realistic. You must have worked, Cathie."

"I have worked hard. I care a great deal for my painting."

Redgold sighed and turned away from the picture. The type of work, the technical phrases, had called up a time when the vocabulary of the studio was frequently in her ears. Jack's studio was in her mind—the happy hours she had spent in that quaint room on the top floor of the Travers' home in London.

She remembered the long ago, when she had selected from Jack's work a few pictures for their home in India. She could hear herself saying: "We must have this little scene of the Bleau Woods, with the bluebells," or "I would love that one of the thatched roof cottage and the apple blossoms," or "We must have the Downs of Hearne Bay and the turning of that lovely lane, with the sea beyond."

Her mind wandered. She thought of the day Jack and she studied some of the lovely old

pictures in the National Gallery.

"There is my Lady Romance," she had said; "and how cruel her fate!" They were gazing at the beautiful face of Lady Hamilton, who was so loved by our great national hero and yet died in poverty.

"Fate will be more kind to us," Jack answered.

As if it were yesterday, came her answer: "It is well that we cannot see what life will measure out to us."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE HEIR OF THE ASHLEYS

Time sped on. The soft coloring of early summer was over the land. Redgold mused in her study. She stood on the hearthrug in her workshop, the setting for her visions and dreams, for her after-dinner chats with Fred, regarding her books and appointments with a detached air. Tonight she had momentous news for her husband. She was sure now of what had been a rare hope.

As Fred came in, he pushed her chair before the open window.

"We must have some hikes into the hills, dear," he said, as he lighted a cigarette.

"Well, I'm afraid I can't do much hiking for some time."

An unfamiliar quality in her voice struck him as he turned to see her face. It had become soft and wonderful, bright with tears, expressive as he had never seen it before.

"For you see, Fred, I'm sure now of what I've been longing and hoping for."

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Fred leaned over and clasped her in his arms. "Oh, my dear!" he crooned; "Oh, my dear!"

Redgold had a strange satisfaction, not only in the thought of motherhood, but in the idea that it enhanced her loyalty to Fred. She felt that their child would be a recompense for the selfish part in her marriage. Fred was deeply glad. He was quiet and thoughtful, and very solicitous for her. The coming event dominated the whole atmosphere of "Fair-acres." During the summer he stayed about the farm, with every other consideration submerged in thought of his wife.

Redgold, wise enough to appreciate that, for anything precious, one is called upon to pay the price, braved through weary weeks. She gained a new dignity and looked very lovely, flushing easily, but in delicate pink waves that set well on her white skin. She felt that she was just learning to allow herself to be happy.

With competent help, she had more time for literary work and for reading. In her study, upstairs, she had made for herself a delightful environment. The broad western windows, which Fred had built into the room, hung in

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rose and black chintz, looked out on a scene of verdant beauty. The interior had a certain charm—walls of gray-green, a fine background for the choice prints and photographs, couch covers and cushions in harmony. On her shelves were some of the glorious company—Dickens, Scott, Hardy, Thackeray, various poets, some history, and a well-thumbed Roget's Thesaurus.

Redgold was an earnest student, organizing her reading. She hoped, one day, to send forth a work that would be a power for good, and labored with that end in view.

However, her method of reading during the autumn and winter was a desultory one. She remembered Dr. Johnson's declaration that a man who reads four hours a day becomes wise. Renan's "Life of Jesus" she read, and "The Marble Faun," and a good deal of Scott. "The Heart of Mid-Lothian" she perused a second time. Her typed quotations from "Sesame and Lillies" were an inspiration. "Every day of your life," read one, "is ordaining irrevocably for good or evil the custom and practice of your soul."

On the reading of books, Ruskin says: "Am I inclined to work as an Australian miner

would?" Redgold chose the question and its answer: "And your pickaxes are your own care, wit and learning. Your smelting furnace is your own thoughtful soul."

At times she took up sewing, and receded into her own thoughts. They were many and some of them far afield, but usually colored by what the new year would bring to her.

As the weeks went on, she found herself more and more wrapped in her husband's interests, listening for his steps, for his voice; when away, longing for his home-coming. She realized his constant, protecting care, the love, that fine, delicate thing, that values a woman for her soul. That he was true and fine was the tangible link between her and broken ideals. Her faith in him had grown with her. Now the beating next her heart reminded her of the great and lasting bond between them. She asked herself: What was the strange feeling that clutched her? She was sad and glad, and felt so intensely the promise of life before her.

She was freshly stirred by the kindness of the neighbors. Every one within a radius of ten or twenty miles was a neighbor. The various women came at regular intervals, and

always with gifts—a soft, creamy Shetland-wool shawl; pretty blue and white bootees; a little, fragrant, woolly coat. The Ukranian women sent a wool crib mattress, and the nurses in the Sackville Corners hospital fitted out the baby basket. For the joy of it, Redgold would take out the appointments, one by one, and put them back differently. Lined with baby-blue silk and covered with soft white voile, lace-edged, it had all the fittings in ivory—baby brush, toilet powder box, soap box. There were absorbent cotton and rolls of soft white flannel, and a marvel of a sponge.

Catherine Fleming rode down to "Fair-acres" for a two days' visit. She was a real tonic for Redgold, with her breezy conversation and ideas. Her gift was a little chamois coat. "This son of yours must be a real Westerner, and here is his first coat."

"A girl, Cathie; I would love a tiny girl that I could be a real mother to. My dream baby is always a girl."

"With your hair and eyes. But, oh, my dear, a boy has a much better time in this strange world. We are too much the puppets of men. I feel sorry for every girl-baby born into this men's world."



"Fred wants a son. Of course, a man always wants a son. If it is a boy I want him to look like Fred, straight and tall."

"Make a man of him, anyway," was Catherine's parting remark.

During the last weeks of waiting, Redgold felt a great loneliness, longing for a mother whose understanding and experience would help her as nothing else could. Often her eyes filled with tears as she looked out on the lonely stretches of prairie. When the sky was a silvery canopy of stars, the few lights of neighboring homes seemed very remote.

A night came when she could not sleep; going to her study, she hoped to find oblivion in her treasured books. But, too restless and depressed to read, she paced the floor. A momentary feeling of dread swept over her and she wept. Tears brought relief and courage, and a confidence in the future greater than she had known.

Fred had brought her a small rose tree, now in full bloom, that scented her study with its fragrance. It soothed her, as she seated herself before the fire, and at last dozed. The clock chimed the hour of three, bringing her back to consciousness, and strangely happy.

She stole softly downstairs to make tea, and was startled by a gentle tapping on the outside door. On opening it, Mrs. Fitz-Warren, a blanket about her shoulders, entered.

"I could not sleep, Mrs. Ashley," the squaw said. "The wind in the pines tell me you needed me. I stay a few days now."

Redgold was almost overcome. That the kind, motherly squaw should come in upon her loneliness and need of a woman's administration, seemed like an answer to prayer. What mysterious sense had this woman who lived so close to nature? There was a weird light in her eyes as she talked on, in soft voice: "I feel you silently call. I have brought you Indian tea, made of wild sage and many herbs. It will make you strong."

Mrs. Fitz-Warren came upon frequent visits to "Fairacres." Redgold watched for the soft tread of the Indian woman, who never came empty-handed. She would bring a bottle of sweet-flavored Saskatoon wine, or a tonic concoction of roots and herbs, or a bottle of dandelion wine that was like champagne.

During January of the following year Redgold sent away her most ambitious attempt in a short story. But before she heard from the editor the great event in her life took place. Late in February her child was born. It was a boy, an exceptionally fine specimen of babyhood, with a quantity of dark hair, straight back and firm limbs.

The Indian woman, at her bedside, whispered: "Your baby is strong, just like young moose."

It was a solemn moment for Redgold when she first heard her son's cry. It seemed that she had been on a tempestuous sea. As she crept out of the tumult, so spent, so unspeakably weary, the baby, a little wooly bundle, was placed beside her.

"Here is your son," said the trained nurse, in very professional tone. Of course, Redgold asked if the baby was perfect. What mother fails to ask that question? "Not a flaw," was the answer.

At its nearness came that heavenly moment that only a mother can know, that moment when there comes the full realization of motherhood. Angel voices whispered to her again and again that this perfect little human

being was her very own, God's own gift. Never before had she felt so close to her Maker. Motherhood carried her into a new realm where all was good and beautiful.

"Little Son!" she murmured, as she smiled and floated into the vagueness again, on a great billow of happiness.

At the warm contact of the baby's tiny hand, that clung to his finger, a flood of emotion over-whelmed Fred. What he felt towards it, when he took it in his arms, was utterly unlike what he had expected. It was the consciousness of a new source of fear lest it should suffer, and he wanted to protect it, to hold it close against the world's hurts.

In the first joy of parenthood, each was struggling for realization that this precious piece of humanity was their own. New springs of feeling leaped up within them, a new responsibility faced them. When the child became ill, the sky was darkened for them.

The weeks went by; the baby's minute feebleness passed. In the course of the next six months the boy, known as Frederick Redman Ashley, developed into all that a baby should be. His weight, according to standard, was double that at his birth. He was a bright

child, who smiled often, and there was attributed to him a very surprising knowledge of people and surroundings.

Mrs. Fitz-Warren, whose visits with "Sonny" were a weekly event, declared him the very finest papoose in the country. His health and development were a matter of deep concern, and her Indian concoctions were an important part of Redgold's medicine chest.

The Indian woman was failing fast. Her heart "fluttered like a bird." It became a chronic condition. She was finally forced to make an invalid of herself, and settled down at Canyon View Ranch with all the stoic calm of her people. But her interest in the baby never waned, and she wove a willow basket and beaded gloves and sewed in furs for her little papoose.

Old "Rainbow" was a frequent visitor. He was not to be outdone in proprietary attention. When he shyly took from his pocket a pair of beaded moccasins and put them on the little pink feet, he announced the Indian title: "White Dove," son of "White Flame." "Him like me, him fine trapper some day."

Redgold then knew that the Indian had taken her baby right into his heart, as the In-

dians call only those they love by the euphonious Indian names.

"When 'White Dove' big, so big, Rainbow show him all Indian knows."

"You can make a good rider of him, Rainbow."

"'White Dove' ride like Indian, shoot, trap, make teepee."

Quite often she came upon "Rainbow," who had silently sought the child in his carriage. The old Indian would croon in his weird monotone, that of his ancestors, much to the delight of the lively baby, who gurgled and wiggled at his weather-beaten nurse.

## CHAPTER X

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

The weeks flew swiftly by—a month, a year—and then autumn and another harvest on the prairie. Time, the relentless measures of men, had brought a few changes in its wake. The loved Indian woman, Mrs. Fitz-Warren, had passed to the happy hunting ground. Redgold was the lonely little Vera's greatest comfort, and almost daily followed the road that led to Canyon View Ranch.

It was in the great outdoors that they wandered, where Vera felt nearer to that mother who was so much a child of nature. Their favorite haunts, the browning meadows, the slopes, golden and ochre with the late autumn blooms, the hidden trails in the woods, were filled with sacred memories for the girl who so loved her dark-skinned mother. Around many spots hung quaint Indian traditions, a very part of Vera's childhood. The smell of burning wood, the carpets of leaves in the forest—these nature charms cast a magic spell that

had in it a strange comfort.

Fred, now quite a personage in the community, was absorbed in the country's problems. He had gradually won the respect of the men of the district by his sane views on all matters of common interest.

The Farmers' Day was at hand. He addressed meetings in their interests, wrestling with their problems, as he studied their economic needs. He envisioned a body of far-seeing, clear-thinking men, and urged them to take the large view of matters. He gave them a new gospel: that human society does not live on bread alone; the secret of its permanence lies in spiritual vitality. He cited the Romans, who had learned to see in their Empire, behind the affairs of daily life, certain forces that made for an enduring civilization.

Just at this time there arose in the district a situation that pressed home the need for deep thought and for more of the fine old pioneer spirit. A nursing hospital was about to be established. The settlements of Sackville corners and Mayhill were in dire need of nursing service. The friction between the places was so great that they could not agree for their best interests. A delegation from Mayhill at-



tended the Sackville Corners meeting for a discussion of the hospital situation.

Each district was determined to have the hospital. Hours of discussion followed. The representatives from Talton finally stated that the hospital would be built only on the condition that it had the support of a united community, and that it must be located so as to best serve the settlers.

Fred argued with the factions. He preached his gospel and begged them to apply it. At a second meeting, after much delay, a decision was reached: The choice of place was left to the Talton nursing sister, and all agreed to stand by her choice. The delegates departed in a spirit of good-will. Fred felt that the ground had been broken for the undertaking, while the people had glimpsed a new ideal in public service.

It was eventually decided that the hospital should be built at Sackville Corners, near the river and the best water supply. In early spring the work was started. During the summer, building went on apace. Each evening various farmers of the district, in turn, devoted hours to the building operations.

The women, not to be outdone, spent their

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odd leisure hours in making pillow-cases and hemming sheets. A bazaar, to raise funds for the hospital furnishings, was organized.

Late in the season, a prairie fete was planned. Redgold gave many weeks to the training of the young people in the Maypole and other folk dances. Fitz-Warren, as his part of the programme, arranged a Punch and Judy show, much to the delight of the prairie-born children. Fred gathered quite an array of talent, and his *al fresco* concert was voted a success.

Redgold took pleasure in watching the performers on the primitive platform. As the evening darkened, large lamps were lighted; and in the weird, flickering light, the scene resembled the negro performers on the sands of English Coast towns.

The most popular numbers were those given by the impromptu band, organized for the event by an ex-17th Lancers bandsman. He had discovered several musicians, players who could perform on various instruments, from the trombone to the piccolo. "Stoney" proved himself an accomplished drummer.

After the concert came the dance. Redgold, in spite of her weariness, was finally inveigled

by Fitz-Warren to waltz.

"I have not danced for fifteen years, Mrs. Ashley, so you may be sure I am enjoying this."

"The last time I danced in the open was on the lawn of Brentwood Hall, on the Thames."

"And now you are dancing on the Western prairie, in a new country—not quite so much beauty about?"

"There is just as much to delight the senses; instead of roses, prairie flowers; there the ripple of the Thames, here soft breezes; and this moon is as glorious as any ever seen in India."

"I think you are quite wedded to this new West, Mrs. Ashley. It is indeed a pleasure to talk with one who sees beauty in everything, and contentment, too. But who could help but be contented in this bracing new land?"

The dancing continued until the players were exhausted. Redgold came upon "Stoney," seated on an upturned bucket, playing a solo on the big drum.

"What a noise you are making, 'Stoney!'"

"Everyone has been telling me what a player I am. This has been a great day."

"We made money for the hospital, too."

"Well, we certainly earned it, Mrs. Ashley. Your husband deserves great credit. He is as full of work as an egg is full of meat."

It gave Redgold intense satisfaction to realize that the honest, homey people held Fred in genuine esteem. She was quite aware of his development, and how his imagination was stirred by the changes and the progress of the country. The day of the open range was of the past. The little town was expanding into a city. Hitching posts were slowly giving place to automobiles. Street cars clanged down paved streets. Cowboys were beginning to be a curiosity. The ranch industry was secondary to mixed farming. Grain farms began to grow, green and yellow, in the open stretches.

Fred saw in the changing conditions a hard but worthwhile march for the rugged souls who threw in their lot with the country. He sensed the endless opportunities of the great land. He visioned the sure future. He reflected on the possibilities of the races represented in the new settlers. Many did not assimilate; their lack of understanding of good citizenship proved a serious obstacle to national unity. Education, he knew, would solve the problem, but the new country, as yet,

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offered small opportunity for obtaining it. Plans for the uplift of this heterogenous people intermingled in his mind. He did not know that he was fostering that bigness of soul, so typical of his clergyman father.

Redgold was choosing her own way of life—a judicious mingling of homelike peace, that hovered around her son, with the interests of the outer world. She never ceased to store impressions. This new land, vast and changeful, green and golden in a day, it seemed; brown and sear over night, charmed her with its changing moods. Strangely enough, its newness, for her, remained. The people, with their rugged background, their ways of living and thinking, drew her as irresistibly as at the beginning. They were a challenge to the imagination: What went on in their primitive homes? What were their dreams and ambitions and hopes?

The Irish family on the Mayhill road, for instance: what a noble fight they made! There was still much to depress in the first glance at the little house that made a home for them, yet life there was one of continued endeavor. Redgold dwelt on the worth of the work the brave mother was trying to do. She thought that

from the crude little shack might go another of the country's future statesmen; another Lincoln might arise to lead the people into a broader freedom.

The foreign element in the adjacent districts, usually in small colonies, aimed, in many cases, to retain their institutional and communal organization and keep their own language. Redgold, when assisting in the annual Ukrainian national holiday celebration, saw their unique way of life. The event, in the schoolhouse, lasted all day. The thrifty women brought their embroidery on velvet and on cloth, placing it on exhibition. The children displayed their drawing, their penmanship and compositions. All the while the men talked on Ukrainian heroes and their country's history, educating the younger generation. The evening was given over to song. Redgold played on a little organ the weird and lovely airs, while the people sang of their homeland. Yet she noted that the great interest and pride of mothers and fathers, alike, were in the development of their children.

During the evening, the women gave Redgold two comforters for the Sackville Corners hospital. The letter with it read: "These com-

forters are provided by the Ukrainian women, with the hope that they will be of service."

Redgold saw in the gift, and the thought that actuated it, another link in the harmonizing process.

Early in the following year the farmers organized their various interests, with Fred as leader. His many activities brought to the farm, government officials, politicians, and a class of visitors that kept Redgold mentally awake.

In the first hard days she had given Fred reluctant appreciation. Now she found herself admiring the force of his character—so patient, so uniformly successful, so unwearying. As her pride in him grew, her ambition mounted. She saw him reaching a pinnacle in this growing land.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE CALL OF COUNTRY

Frederick Redman, aged two and a half, a high-spirited lad, was growing well. It was the year 1914, and in the spring Redgold's second child, her dream daughter, was born. Little June, given a name long treasured in her mother's heart, was a dainty specimen of babyhood, a typical Redman, with violet eyes and golden hair. Before she was six months old the dark cloud of war hung over the Empire.

Soon the country was recruiting and training men for service. The Polo Club, the pride of Talton, joined up in a body. The air was filled with the magic note of bugle calls, while streets were alive with the dull thud of marching men. As the trains passed the "Fairacres" farm, loaded with their cheering, singing men, all bound for somewhere in France, Redgold felt like an old charger. Down in her heart was an ache, knowing that her time of sacrifice was drawing near.

At breakfast, one morning, Fred broached



the subject of his possible enlistment.

"When in Talton yesterday," he said, "I came upon a regiment of marching men, and quickly turned to a side street. I was ashamed to meet them and not in uniform."

Redgold was silent for a time. Then: "I know your mettle, Fred. It makes me sad and yet glad. I've been expecting this."

Fred wrote to Catherine Fleming. She replied, first congratulating him on answering the Empire's call. Then: "Now as to Redgold and the children—I shall stay with them for a year. I am selling my horses to the government, and will cease operations at the ranch for the present. Farley, my overseer, is old and cannot go overseas. He can manage your farm. Redgold and I can help with the work and do anything that is necessary to keep the farm going."

Redgold readily agreed to the arrangement. The neighbors came forward with promises of assistance. Even the old Indian, "Rainbow," was to play a part. In his usual silent manner,

he walked into the "Fairacres" kitchen.

"White man go fight?" he asked Fred. Not waiting for an answer, he continued: "I look after 'White Flame' and papooses."

"Fine!" Fred answered. "Mrs. Ashley will need plenty of help."

"Me help lots—chop wood, pump water, do everything."

Redgold smiled, for she knew that "Rainbow's" numerous family would be told off to do the unpleasant tasks.

The day after Christmas, Fred left for Overseas. Redgold's pride, the feeling that clutched at her heart—was it love?—forbade a parting in public. Fred showed all the Englishman's reticence of speech in time of great emotion. But what was lacking in words poured from the eyes and was felt in the pressure of arms.

The months sped on. "Fairacres" was the scene of constant activity—farm work, war work, letter-writing, preparing of parcels. As they read in the English papers that the dear old regiments, so closely linked with their

childhood, were almost wiped out, they strove the harder to find solace in their tasks.

Redgold gradually rose to the demands. After Fred had gone she felt that everything was over for her, as if everything had come to an end. She was alone as she had never been.

She made her own George Herbert's aphorism: "Undress your soul at night." Through the lonely stillness of the night watches, she searched her soul. Reviewing her life with Fred, she found much that brought her reproach—her discontent her indifference, her periods of aloofness, her frequent thought and brooding, especially in those first days, over Jack Travers, her rather thoughtless and heartless acceptance of Fred's constant attention and kindnesses.

She found comfort in analyzing her reactions to him, in testing her motives, in taking stock of the woman she had become. Did she glimpse a growing softness?

In her persistent thought of her husband, with the stress and glamor of war about him, she unconsciously began to build up an ideal man. She had made small endeavor to answer to what he gave her, to what he felt for her. She was heaven and home to him. Yet she

had raised a barrier between them, preventing her life melting into his, hindering her response to the call of his soul.

How miserable she must have made him feel! Could she have so conducted herself with a man she loved? He so loved her. It was therefore not contrary to the workings of human nature that she should be strengthened in her regard for him. Was she thus strengthened? She had not been conscious of any change in her rather selfish regard for him and for all he represented in her life. Now she asked herself: What was the feeling that so gripped her?

Catherine took charge of the Red Cross work in Sackville Corners district. At the headquarters, adjoining the hospital the women of the settlement served in turn. During Redgold's hours on duty she came to know the Reverend Harold Beeson—a confirmed bachelor, an Oxford professor in peace times, a military chaplain on sick leave.

One cold and rainy evening they were alone in the Red Cross depot. He had heard much

of her from the settlers' wives, who all liked her—an unusual thing, with her beauty and talents. He knew women and their tendency to jealousy. They had spoken of her eccentricities, but more of her kind heart and her courage. They found her so scrupulously fair and above pettishness. She never lost that sense of being what she really was.

This knowledge drew him to her and raised the desire for a closer acquaintance. On this night of rain he eyed her wistfully. What a woman! What the friendship of such a woman could mean to a man! Lonely, and far from his own kind, she attracted him more than he dared confess.

Thus their friendship began. Their love of books and kindred interests cemented it. Harold Beeson very frequently found himself driving to "Fairacres" on many excuses—a book, matters of war work or church work.

Redgold was very lonely. The war was severing so many friendships—"Stoney" was gone; the Fitz-Warrens had taken up permanent residence in England. Only Catherine and Harold Beeson were left. So she found herself looking forward to those afternoon calls, with their pleasant chats in the chintz-

hung study.

He was very understanding and began to share her confidences. She enjoyed intimate conversation with him; indeed, it was refreshing to have such a man to confide in. It brought to mind a remark in her mother's drawing-room, something about women never appreciating women, and: "When I want generous and genuine sympathy, I prefer to cross the sex line."

Harold Beeson treated her with delicate kindness. He was quite convinced, for a time, that it was only friendship. Yet, it was uncanny, he thought, after each visit with her, how she left her image on his senses. It haunted him.

Fred's letters left Redgold deeply thoughtful. He was her honor, and, almost in spite of herself, she was being swept along on this new adventure. War did strange things. It let down barriers of reserve that usually hedge about people. Yet she attempted to live up to her standards. She would make up her mind not to see Harold and found a certain comfort in the decision, though soon broken.

He was dominant and insistent, expending more emotion than he had done in his forty

years. Something fell from him—that aloofness, that stiff routine life of past years. He made good resolutions, too, but they persistently failed him.

He found a charm in her mystery. He knew she had had some strange experience. How she puzzled him! He came upon her one day, seated by a sunlight window, her hair a golden aureola. Why was she here, leading a life almost of drudgery, on a prairie farm? What she could be in any setting! Suddenly came an immense pity for her, so brave, so determined to do her part. Her fine spirit was a benediction. He knew that he loved her.

For all her small confidences, there was something illusive about her. It was long before she told him anything of her past. Then he had glimpses into the secret corners of her heart. He came to "Fairacres" one afternoon, stating that he was free for the rest of the day. There was early tea, and the children were away to bed. Baby June was soon asleep. Nightgowned, "Sonny" made excursions into his mother's study, and out again and in again. Then they sat before the fire and Harold told a story, and "Sonny" took his turn and Redgold gave her usual tale. Harold's was "Moses

in the Bulrushes," and then came "Sonny's" "Mother Goose," and Redgold had to tell about "Sonny," which was a continued story with wonderful adventures. When the clock struck seven the order to bed was strictly enforced.

Back before the fire, the two, for a while, sat in silence. Redgold had a story in mind. She was musing it out. Harold had a habit of quoting to himself poetry or prose. He had been reading "The Vision of Dante," and went on, now, with the closing lines of "Purgatory":

Might I sing, though but in part,  
That beverage, with whose sweetness I had ne'er  
Been sated. But since all the leaves are full,  
Appointed for the second strain, mine art,  
With warning bridle checks me. I return'd  
From the most holy wave, regenerate,  
E'en as new plants renew'd with foliage new,  
Pure and made apt for mounting to the stars."

Redgold stirred, lifted her arms and clasped her hands behind her head. "I drafted that article we discussed: 'The first international love story of the Pacific Coast.' Let me outline it for you."

"May I light my pipe and smoke while I listen? Your voice has a charm for me. You can be described as was Byron: 'Who speaks like music.'"

"You flatterer! Please light your pipe."



She talked on, relating the main points of her story, listening to Harold's criticism and quotations. He finally said: "That story has several links of association with the great historic love stories of the world. I would suggest that you search out some of them."

"I have a book: 'Old Love Stories Retold.' I will find it." There is the peculiar romance of Dante and Beatrice, that of John Keats and Fanny Brawn, the tale of Shelley and Mary Godwin, and many others."

She went into another room, searched in a box and finally secured the book. Handing it to Harold, she said: "You look it over will I dot down your poetic references."

As he opened the book, leafing over the pages, he came upon a loose photograph. "Why hide pictures in old books? Why, who is this? It is surely Captain Jack Travers! My old friend in India."

Redgold's heart missed a beat. She thought she had safely hidden that old picture where she would not need to look upon it. Now it had been thrust on her. Memories were to be renewed. Harold knew him.

"It is Captain Travers," she answered in rather a weak voice.

"What are you doing with his picture? Where did you know him?"

"I was associated with him many years ago in England. How did you know him?" She asked the question rather timidly, afraid of showing undue interest, yet so eager for news of Jack.

"I knew him in India. I think I told you that, in 1911, I obtained leave of absence from the university and spent a year there. I was chaplain of the 19th in Delhi, and so had opportunity of a close friendship with Travers."

"Do tell me about him. Was he happy?"

"Happy? I can hardly answer that question. He seemed a very strange chap. The whole station tried to make up to him, but he held himself aloof a good deal of the time. Of course, he was very popular. There was great competition amongst the ladies for his favors, but he kept them at a safe distance."

"He was quite a gallant in the days when I knew him."

"I remember the wife of one of the officers, and the beauty of the regiment, tried her best to add him to her collection. You asked me if he were happy."

He turned to Redgold and, with a start,

noted her strained face. A wonder sprung up in his mind. Had he accidentally stumbled on the hidden solution of his puzzle?

"Tell me about him," Redgold murmured.

"Happy! I do not think so. There seemed a mystery about him. He entered into the gaieties of the army people rather feverishly at times; then he would appear to shun everyone and everything. In my capacity as padre I had opportunity for a certain intimacy, and we became good friends. I was one of the favored few, for he mixed little, except with officers of his own regiment, and they adored him. In fact, he stood the greatest test of a man—men, generally, approved of him."

"Did he still take the same keen interest in polo, and was he a favorite rider in the gymkhana?"

"He was the ladies' favorite for Gretna Green and one of the best polo players at the station. Polo ponies seemed to be his one extravagance."

"I am glad he continued to love horses. He was famous in army circles in England for his horsemanship. I remember his performance at Canterbury gymkhana."

"He had a fine Arab in India, known as

Possie. It was the pride of the whole British and native garrison at the station. It had so many tricks—one was associating the ladies with sugar; and it was a laughable sight to see Possie nosing around the smartly-dressed women, looking for sweets. Another habit was a desire to shake hands with the Colonel, who was very touchy, on parade. How crestfallen Jack was when the Colonel told him to keep his circus horse off the parade ground!"

The story delighted Redgold. "I can see Possie lifting a heavy hoof to shake hands with the peppery Colonel. How I would love to have been there! All this seems just a part of Jack. It brings him back so vividly to memory. We used to ride a great deal, and I could never think of Jack Travers without his horses and dogs."

"He had a well-loved dog, too, an Airedale, and his constant companion. On Jack's moody days, it was touching to see the bond of sympathy between master and dog. It would sit with nose resting on Jack's knee, love and devotion shining from its eyes. On such days, Jack's brother officers, with all the finer feelings of the well-bred, left him severely alone."

"You say he was moody at times? Did he give you his confidence?"

"To a certain extent. I knew that he had a great disappointment. It was said that he returned to India, after a furlough, a changed man. He had gone away a bright, happy youth, and came back a rather embittered man. The tale runs that he was about to marry a beautiful English girl, and that she threw him over on the eve of their wedding."

Harold looked keenly at Redgold. Her heart swelled with righteous indignation as she thought of the idle reports and the cruelty of the world.

"However," continued Harold, "I formed the opinion, from certain of Jack's remarks, that he was not without fault in the matter. One night he told me that he had lost the greatest treasure a man may lose—the heart of a good woman; that he had, by his own act, let someone rare and precious slip out of his life."

Redgold's eyes filled with sudden tears.

"Poor Jack!" she said.

Harold's ideas of the matter were rapidly taking form. Reaching over, he placed his hands on her shining hair.

"Tell me," he asked, "did Jack mean much to you in those days?"

"He meant very much to me in those old days in England."

Could it be possible, he thought, that she was the mystery girl in Jack Travers' life?

"I think you loved him. Can't you tell me about it? You have come to mean so much to me that I would be glad to share your confidence in this, and I might be able to help you."

"How I wish I could unburden my heart! You cannot imagine the relief it would give me. I know, too, that I can never thus ease my mind."

"What a strange girl you are! So friendly, and yet so reticent—a happy contradiction."

"My experience has taught me reticence."

"Won't you take me a little into your confidence? You loved Travers?"

Her eyes told him that she loved, all too well.

"And you love him still?"

"It is hard to forget. I have struggled, all these years, against my memories."

He knew now that before him was the beautiful English girl that Travers had mentioned.

"Oh, dear God, the pity of it!" he murmured.

"What terrible thing could have happened to part you?"

She did not answer. For a time there was tense silence. How strange, he thought, that he should meet, on a Western farm, the only woman he ever cared for, married, and the great treasure of Travers' life.

"I am puzzled to understand what made it necessary for you to so alter your course in life. You have been disowned by your family, you say, and given up everything that you held dear."

"There is so much that I cannot explain. That has become one of the worst features of my situation."

"If I knew, I might be able to comfort you; and how gladly I would do that! I cannot help but feel that the mysterious clutch of India is upon it all. Travers told me of the eternal play of fate that appeared to dog his steps through life. For generations this mysterious hand has flung the family into tragedy."

"Ever since the days of Clive there has been a Travers in India. During the life of Jack's great-grandfather, the curse of the blue-veiled goddess—each man of you shall meet a violent death—came upon them. Since then not one

of them has escaped.

"The first to feel it was a captain in a native regiment. His kindly nature and keen insight into the hearts and minds of the natives made him much beloved. His wife, whom he adored, had blessed him with a son, who, at the time, was a lively little lad of six years. Mrs. Travers was frivolous and rather selfish. It was her love of old temples and the wonderful religious rites that caused the curse to fall upon her husband and son, and down through the generations.

"During a great festival of Buddha, she and her son had entered the temple unheeded by the fervent natives. What a sight it must have been for the English girl—the old, dimly-lit temple, the air oppressive with the sweet fragrance of yellow and white temple flowers; the priests, clad in long, flowing robes of orange yellow, chanting their prayers. To the small child the great figure of Buddha, with the garlands of temple flowers around neck and body, and the many gods and goddesses in similar decoration, were objects of the keenest interest.

"The dreaded blue-veiled goddess, which no human being must look upon, except through



the veil, held the boy's attention. Suddenly it seemed as if the temple flowers were beckoning him to see what was behind that veil of mystery. The mother, too intent upon the beauties of the edifice, failed to notice the lad, who crept up to the goddess and stealthily lifted the veil."

Redgold sat breathless.

"The shrieks of the natives and groans of the priests brought the mother to a realization of the danger of her child. He had done what no other white person had attempted and lived. Only that he was the man-child of the dear Captain Sahib-Travers prevented the worshippers from murdering him and his mother.

"The child was at once sent to England. On reaching manhood he became an officer in India, and he and his wife were murdered in the Indian mutiny. They left a son, who was Jack's father. You will know that the father was killed, soon after Jack's birth, on the hunting field. Thus Jack is the last of his line, and it looks as if the curse were upon him.

"Poor Jack!" murmured Redgold, almost appalled by the story.

"I think that I understand. It was Jack's

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great love for you, and fear of bringing upon you the curse, that made him sacrifice what he held so dear. Yet his great love should smother any Indian curse."

The horror of the tale almost stifled Redgold. Had Jack, knowing this terrible thing, intended in those dear dead days, to marry her? Surely not! He had loved her, she knew; she never doubted that, even if he had so lamentably failed her.

"When did Jack first learn of the curse?" she asked.

Harold hesitated, thinking. "It was when he reached the age of twenty-five, after he returned to India."

Redgold sighed with relief. "Our romance was over before he went to India again. So you know that the curse was not the cause of our break. Jack did not know it then."

"Why did you both sacrifice your lives as you have done? You loved him, he loved you. I cannot understand."

"I wish I could tell you. Memory of the dead prevents me. Probably the knowledge of this curse explains why he never married."

"Jack is the kind who has only one deep love, and he is not likely to make a loveless mar-

riage."

"I am glad he did not marry," Redgold whispered, with that dog-in-the-manger inclination of her sex.

"Perhaps it is better so." Harold's thoughts were moving in circles. They always brought him back to the central question: Why? Why?

## CHAPTER XII

### HUMAN INTERESTS

Harold Beeson realized that Redgold had woven about herself a veil that it was not easy to penetrate. He found himself constantly taking knowledge of her, appraising her strength and probing her woman's weaknesses. She knew that his ardent attentions left her, each time, a little less sure of herself.

The women worked hard, and, with Farley in charge, looked well after the farm. "Sonny" and June grew bonnier and chubbier and their mother trained them and was a tireless playmate, for all her other activities. She had several soldiers' wives under her care, and gave them help and cheer. Semi-weekly letters went to Fred, and many parcels. There was much knitting and sewing to be done. As an undercurrent for Redgold was Harold Beeson's devotion.

In May they began to take long jaunts over the prairie and into the foothills. Once Redgold was in the saddle, she coveted every spare

hour for riding.

"I'm dying for a good gallop," she said, as they cantered along amid the spring beauties. "Come along," she cried, flicking her horse with the whip. They rode neck-and-neck, the horses delighting in the race. "On! On!" she called to him. "How delightful to feel this soft wind in your face!" Hoofs pounding, they reached the hill-top, and "Fairacres" was in view. Then Redgold, cheeks flushed, eyes alight, slowed down to an easy canter.

"You are such a good pal," she cried, "I could go on with you forever."

"Why not?" he queried. "Let us ride away into the sunset. I would be content never to come back. There is a great world over there where we could wander."

He frequently surprised her now with such remarks, and especially with the seriousness with which he gave them to her. She could not help but feel flattered by his devotion. It brought out that bloom that often comes with masculine admiration.

The dignified parson presented to the settlers a strange spectacle, for he was ever in Redgold's train and found himself in strange haunts. She had a passion for hunting out

stories, and searched about old farms and around old landmarks for material for her writing. She knew that people set her down as odd, but did not object to that conception of her character.

The situation was quite evident to Catherine. She could not escape people's suggestive remarks. Buried deep was a touch of Patrician insolence, and the opinions of people were not a matter of deep concern. However, she knew that charity would not extend itself in this case, and determined to discuss the matter with Redgold.

The opportunity came. "There are some people," she very casually remarked, "who are bound to be subjects of discussion. Perhaps it is because they have charm; perhaps they arouse a certain jealousy, and there is something alluring in the genesis and development of a tale about them; or it may be ascribed to an inherent interest in gossip."

"Why such weighty phrases, dear?" asked Redgold. "Is not this dissertation directed against my friendship with Harold Beeson?"

"My dear old pal, it is. The ladies of the community are commenting on it. I told them that if I were a man I would be in love with

you myself."

Redgold flushed. "I knew that would come." There was not much that she could say. Lines from "The Winter's Tale" came to mind, and she very retrospectively repeated them: "'But, O! the thorns we stand upon.'"

"You know, dear old Redgold, that you cannot play with fire; neither can you expect immunity if you break the conventions, especially in a small Western town. I think that remark about man being free, yet everywhere in chains, comes very near the truth in your case, or in that of any woman whose husband is absent. But the question persists: What are we going to do about it? Think it over."

Alone in her study, she lingered over Catherine's remarks. Turning her wedding ring idly on her finger, she conjured up Fred's face and his uprightness and fine courage. And there came to her a strong sense of the futility of her association with Harold Beezon. Had she not gone into this affair with her eyes open? She was not a child. But she was so lonely. Did not the time of stress excuse her? Harold gave her the deference that she loved, and he was her own kind. Did that give her special privilege?

Wholly engrossed in her inner struggle, there was nothing clear in her mind. Was she not carried, on the high wave of feeling, unto rather dangerous ground? Was she not doing the very things that she had so condemned in others? Was she not walking the road that led to the wreck of her childhood? Before her came the command: "Thou shalt not!"

The days sped on, unchanged. They continued to work hard. Redgold and Harold walked and rode and studied and chatted. She caught herself, at times, in a hurried, impatient haste to be with Harold again, to feel the constant uncertainty of what he might do from one moment to another. She could forget everything in those intense hours she spent with him. She often found his eyes upon her, with such a hungry look in them; his blood did hunger for her. As he thought of her, the fine blue veins in his temple swelled and throbbed.

One day he said: "What am I going to do? I've been seeing too much of you. I have known that for some time, but I cannot keep away. There is surely meant to be something more than a passing friendship in our meeting. There is a vision of you ever before me. What



am I going to do? Since I first heard your voice it has haunted me, and the longing to be with you has never left me."

He frequently put such questions to her now. Though never attempting to pass the barrier she had built, she knew that he was only holding himself in leash.

Gradually but surely the situation changed. Their association developed a new phase, a certain intimacy that comes with frequent meetings. He knew now that he wanted to possess her, soul and body, and forgot his code, his creed. Whatever threatened in the future became unimportant.

His very voice entreated her, and, of course, the woman in her made her very tender to him. He came upon her, one afternoon, in the garden, now at the height of its summer bloom. It was a real setting for romance: she was the very heart of feminine appeal in her delicate blue colors.

"There is no setting like a garden to enhance a woman's charm," he murmured. "I cannot look at the flowers, only one flower." His voice caressed her. "You know what is happening to me. Life is measured, for me, by the times I am with you, and I cannot go on

without you."

She was ever stamped on his mind as she looked then: straight and slim and infinitely alluring. But he frightened her; she moved down the path. Following, he turned her round and raised her face to gaze deeply into her eyes.

"How can you go on without me, Redgold?" he asked. "Don't you care a little?"

She was lonely. He was her own kind, so understanding, so appreciative. He gave her just the attention she needed—that well-bred attention, that old-world courtesy that is always a lure to a woman. If she allowed her thoughts to rest for a moment on what he meant to her just now, with Fred so far away, she knew she would reveal her feelings. She held her eyes widely open while she looked up at him.

"I would not dare to care, Harold. Reason with yourself, and do not say such things to me."

"I can no more reason with myself than I can resist such longings. I do not profess to be different from my kind. I am consumed by the same desires. Circumstances threw us together; they have mastered me."

He took her delicate face, with its startled expression, between his hands. "If I should put my arms about you, I could never let you go. You have held me off with such persistence. I can't stand it longer."

He looked down on her drooping head and felt a barrier within him give way.

"Come," he said, as he opened his arms. She did not move. He suddenly swept her to him and drew her face, as his burning lips pressed on hers. The contact was momentous.

There was a queer silence. Then the outer world broke in upon them, as Redgold's quicker sense recognized footsteps. In their absorption they had not heard a call. It was Catherine; she appeared around the hedge. With grave face and unsteady voice, she said: "A cable for you, Redgold. Fred has been seriously wounded."

It was after anxious weeks that they knew that Fred would recover. The cable read: "Marked improvement. Recovery assured."

During the long period of suspense, Redgold had been as one beyond sensation, numb.

She was slow in awakening to the understanding that Fred was saved to her. As it came, she was aware of a physical release from tension that was like a new birth.

She stood by her study window, facing the great expanse of hill and mountain. Back of her were long weeks in which conscience had spoken, as from across the sea. Ahead of her were life, duty, going on. She felt herself, in a queer, literal way, another person, longing for Fred.

Looking into her immediate situation, she saw that the pleasant talks and walks and rides with Harold Beeson lead along the primrose path of dalliance; at the end, fortunately, there stood the Angel with the flaming sword: "Thou shalt not!"

She knew she must put him out of her life, and worried and wondered how she would terminate the association.

Our life problems, however, are often solved by invisible helpers.

"There's a Divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will."

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During the next few weeks, Harold was ordered to France. After his departure her mind clarified. It held no longer a picture of the man who wished to possess her. Memory retained only the man who stimulated her, who urged her to put more soul into her work, who thought she should find the voice to give utterance to the aspiration of the people, who contended that the dream in the heart was the only thing that lasts. Thus he came, bearing the gifts of the richness of his mind.

Catherine and Redgold studied the long list of wounded and killed. They found the names of relatives, friends and those they had loved in the old days, dropping, one by one. It was when Catherine read of the wounding of Captain Edgar that she decided to go to England and France.

"I am not doing enough here," she said; "I want to be nearer the scene of action."

Before Christmas she left for Overseas.

Fred was convalescing in England. In the early spring he was to take up War Office duties in London. Redgold took over Catherine's Red Cross duties and settled down to a sterner life. She found a certain content in the busy days and a great joy in her handsome children.

But it seemed that the white-winged dove did not long hover over "Fairacres."

English papers continued to give reports of the falling of relatives and loved friends, much depressing Redgold. She reached the stage that she almost expected to see the picture that finally unrolled before her. She read:

"Captain Jack Travers, D.S.O., killed."

He seemed to come to her then, in spirit, and whisper: "I have redeemed myself. Say that you forgive me."

In the gathering darkness of the early spring night, she knelt by her window. There, through the night, she fought her battle. All the pent-up anguish of the bitter years of disillusionment swept over her. Her shoulders shook with sobs, though there were no tears. Her spirit seemed to leap the void between life and death. In memory she wandered again by the river; it was the early days of her love.

Out of the dark, immeasurable space his voice came to her in the whisper: "We shall meet in Nirvana."

She lived once more those short, sweet times of her girlhood. Picture after picture passed before her; she saw him ennobled and forgiven by his sacrifice. Now the last of the Travers lay sleeping, and the curse of the blue-veiled goddess had another victim.

Upon her sorrow came a strange message, a letter found in Jack's tunic. The square khaki envelope was travel-stained. She took it from the outer envelope and came upon Jack's writing. The address ran: "In case of my death, forward to Mrs. Frederick Ashley." The message was one that only she could understand:

"Till we meet in Nirvana."

She sat helpless, her strength ebbing, unable to make a sound, to turn her head. It was when she heard a loud, insistent ringing in her head and saw stars that she knew she was fainting.

She was ill for several days and lay rigid, questioning everything. Why had life so treated her? Was she never to know the placid, middle path? Could she not store and

treasure her memories in a hidden corner of her heart and not be called upon to bring them out again and again? For days all her energy was strained in the endeavor to keep her mind from sinking into helpless confusion.

The children hovered about. Little June and sturdy "Sonny" strove to be her very attentive nurses. Their childish chatter worried her; their ministrations irritated her. She was relieved when night came and the house was silent.

She looked often upon Jack's last message, studying the writing on the stained envelope, reading again the words: "Till we meet in Nirvana."

She would lay the letter away—in her desk, in a drawer, in some little-used book. Could Jack be trying to give her a message? She could hear him call, she could hear his pleading voice—she felt that he hovered about her.

The nearness of the letter, with its continual call, its pleading, worked on her nerves. She could stand it no longer and keep her reason. Packing it in a tin box, she buried it beneath a pine tree in the ravine. From her window, she gazed upon the tree whose branches wav-



ed over the last link with Jack Travers, the link:

"Which terminated all."

## CHAPTER XIII

### ADVANCING IN THE WORLD

It was another summer, the last year of the war. In July Fred returned. All other interests at "Fairacres" were dwarfed in the thought of his home-coming. The sense of expectancy hovered, like a golden halo, over Redgold and the children.

On the night before his arrival Redgold lay till dawn, wide-eyed, with hours of silence and self-examination. She glanced at the life that now unrolled before her. She looked upon something in her which had grown, insensibly, to strength during the last lonely months. It was what she truly wanted in life: to be with Fred, to play the part of a good wife—the one part, she now saw, that fate had meant for her. She desired to be the background of his life, to depend on him, to feel that he depended on her.

Her thoughts turned upon the years since he had been away. She had carried very heavy responsibilities, almost too heavy at

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times. Yet she had come through, with the farm in very good condition. New land had been broken; there was this year a larger acreage than ever before. She had slightly increased their savings, and felt that she had kept the home-fires burning.

And the children! She pictured Fred's joy in them; the manly "Sonny," so like his father; the dainty June, with all her Grandmother Redman's fatal beauty.

She reviewed her association with Harold Beeson. It had been almost a step aside. But, blotting out the last incident, purifying the memory, there remained something pleasant and rich and worthwhile. She would tell Fred. There should be no secrets. That was not the way to take up life again. She felt assured of his trust and understanding.

The morning brought renewed activity. The children decorated the interior of the house and the veranda with flags and flowers. A huge "Welcome Home" adorned the mantle.

Redgold, who had been on the lawn with "Sonny" and June, watching, came into the living-room. It was a real woman's room—plants around, a spreading fern on the low piano, piles of cushions on the couch, interest-

ing photographs here and there, and, of course, magazines and books about.

She turned on the lights to note the soft rose glow. She loved rose colors, and thought that they were like life at "Fairacres" should be—refined and pleasant, with the mellow background.

She adjusted chairs, arranged the flowers, moved the cushions. As she fussed about, she sang little snatches of song: "Tell me, do you love me. . . . For that's the sweetest story ever told." Why had such an old song come into her mind?

The children watched from the driveway. "I see the smoke of the train," called "Sonny." "There it is, over the hill." They rushed to the gate, the dogs barking, the children shouting. Redgold screened her eyes as she watched the iron monster curving across the prairie to Talton.

She felt that a different Redgold would greet him. He was so much more to her now. Absence surely had made the heart grow fonder. How great are the magnifying effects of time and separation! Respect and admiration ripened into something deeper and more lasting.

A few minutes—it seemed like an age! All at the gate; all eyes down the road; and around the corner came Fred, breathless, travel-stained, expectant. A wild rush, and she was in his arms!

"Fred!" she sobbed; his husky: "My darling!" Their mutual tears checked their words.

As they went towards the house, Fred's arms were not large enough for her and the children. She laughed and cried, almost hysterically, and clung to him as the rock of her life.

It was another Fred who came to them, with the shadow of Flanders in his eyes. He was rather thin, very grave and with a new dignity. His hair had slightly whitened, giving him a distinguished appearance. As he stood on the hearthrug, his hands in his pockets, Redgold was aware of that touch of masterfulness in him. No other man had given her that impression of strength and physical

poise. His mere presence in the room brought her back to a sense of reality. It had always been like that with Fred; one felt that rock-like quality in him.

Though she could not word it, she felt a home-like peace steal into her heart that made the worries and unusual experiences of the past four years vanish like a wretched dream.

The afternoon was one of quiet delight under the trees. As Fred chatted of all the intimate homely things, he gazed upon what lay within his line of vision. Broad across the foreground lay a great expanse of grain, tall and green in some places, in others changing to ochre and coppery red. The stately heads of wheat and feathery oat tassels made a picture well worth looking upon. The cattle browsed on the slopes. Four years of growth had given "Fairacres" a new beauty. The stretch of lawn, sloping from the house to the road, was green and luxuriant. Redgold had cared for it, running the lawnmower back and forth at regular intervals, picking out the dandelions, clipping the edges.

The pine trees that she and Fred had planted, during their first year on the farm, had made of the driveway quite a stately avenue.

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Redgold's garden, separated from the lawn by a hedge, lay to the west. They wandered through it as she showed him all the old-fashioned flowers she had cultivated. The shelter-belts, rows of trees that served as wind-breaks, were growing well.

Fred looked on it all with a strange exaltation of spirit, a blessed, an intimate reunion with his own acres. He felt an absurd flush come up under his tan as he murmured: "My house, my garden, my farm, with acres of wheat and oats, with cattle on the slopes, with books, and a garden—such a setting for Redgold and the children!"

With thought of her came the feeling of his deep indebtedness for all she had done to retain and increase, to make this scene. "Mine!" he whispered. "Not mine, but ours!"

After the lengthy ceremony of seeing the children to bed had been accomplished, after the last kiss had been given, the last drink of water carried, the light turned out for the last time, they settled down for intimate talk. It was more than eight years since Redgold had left her homeland. She hardly realized the great yearning for it that lay hidden in her heart.

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"I was tempted many times, during the last year, to take the children and go to England."

"I almost cabled for you. At times I could hardly resist. It was only the danger of travel, and the danger over there, that prevented me. I knew you were safer here."

"I wonder just what I would have done, if you had," she mused; "fallen to the temptation, I expect, even if I were supposed to keep the home-fires burning."

"Well, you certainly stood by your guns. I can hardly realize that this is all mine. No, not mine—ours! Think of a fellow coming back to this!" The wonder of it overcame him like a wave.

He walked about the room, idly examining the pictures and books. Redgold surveyed him as he smoked a cigarette. She remembered that she loved to see him thus; no one held a cigarette more gracefully.

"It is fine to have you here, dear?" she said.

"I can't tell you how glad I am. It was forlorn enough at any time; since Catherine left it has been dismal. How I counted the days! I marked then off on the calendar. And now the long waiting is over and you are here! I can hardly grasp it."



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"Nor can I! It seems that we are in your treasured Nirvana, dear old Redgold. Home is heaven."

"You have not seen all the changes yet, Fred. We must ride around the land tomorrow. I shall be relieved to shift the responsibility to your broad shoulders."

"Could you find anyone more ready to accept them? How I longed for my own acres, you will never know nor understand."

Redgold read his face with a new penetration; it was different from what it had been when he left her—the mouth was set a little sternly, the eyes had lost their good-humored indolence.

She sensed the pictures flashing through his mind, memories that she hoped would be banished by the activities and interests and demands of the home that he so prized.

"I used to hear your voice," he murmured, retrospectively—"guess imagination conjured up visions of you. I often started, convinced that I heard the children call. Those visions stung and tortured me."

As he talked on, she moved nearer the fire, where she could watch his face. For the first time she had a keen insight into his experi-

ences and his endurance. She realized that a spirit, new and strong, pierced through his future plans, endowing his eyes with something deeper, wider, more tolerant.

Fred was in an almost foolishly emotional state those first days. The least little thing threw him off the track. He could not help but dwell on the fact that he was really home again, that the long grind of war was over, that office work that he detested, the long slavery to duty finished at last.

He would ask himself if he had really come to live on this peaceful prairie, in this quiet welcoming home, with the new-born love of the wife he held so precious. It was wonderful, unreal!

Redgold noted that he was picking up the political occupation of his earlier years. He began to hunt out forgotten notebooks and yellowing sheets of suggestions and ideas on the making of roads, the building of schools, and schemes for bettering the condition of the farmer.

In August an election was thrust upon Tal-

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ton constituency. It caught Fred and the whole district in its toils, involving the women as well as the men. Nominations were at hand, with the demand, from all points, for an able man. It was evident that there was rampant a new conception of national life, a higher ideal of public service.

The returned man was the hero. Whispers of the nomination of Fred Ashley, to fill the vacancy at the capital, were in the air. The rousing gathering in Sackville Corners school was unanimous in their choice of Fred for the honor.

It left Redgold breathless. The prospect of an ambition realized kept her in a sort of glow; what it would mean to have Fred in the legislature! Perhaps this was the way of starting to build up honors for the future generations of Ashleys! Perhaps this would be the means of forming a background for the family!

While Fred was cool and rather indifferent as to the prospects of nominations, Redgold was in a state of nervous tension. The auspicious day came. At the final meeting, in Talton, Fred received the nomination, but there was a three-cornered fight.

Then began, for Redgold, the busiest weeks of her life. She worked early and late, taking thought for her husband, giving him meticulous care—that his linen was faultless, that he had no home worries, that he went out well fed. He knew that her faith in him was strong; she realized that nothing so ennobles a man as to have the woman he loves believe in him; nothing so encourages him as to have her assume that he is going to be a success.

She followed his meetings with close interest. Seated in the packed school house or church hall, she listened, nerves taut, to his speeches. Would he say just the right thing? Would he convey his message to his audience?

All felt Fred's personality; perhaps his sincerity and rugged honesty made the strongest appeal. Fred had one outstanding gift, sincerity and his electors knew it.

Thus Redgold acquired the campaign habit and, for all her anxiety, revelled in the novelty. She busied herself with the registration of voters, a matter of indifference to many people.

The weather was very bad, one heavy rain following another. Yet, not daunted, she harnessed her mare and drove through mud and

water to carry on her work. When the motor could be used again, she made certain that all under her charge were registered. People were aggravating, but she kept a smiling face. Nothing mattered but votes. The rattle of the car seemed to say: "Votes! Votes! Votes!" If she rode her horse at a trot, there would come the echo: "Votes! Votes! Votes!"

Weary and tired, she spent an evening on a chapter of "Pickwick Papers," an account of the election at "Eatonswill." After reading it she considered herself a good politician, quite agreeing to "be particular about the children, my dear Sir—it has always a great effect, that sort of thing."

There were long hours in committee rooms. "What a worker you are, Mrs. Ashley!" remarked Fred's campaign manager. "I am counting on you to address some of our women's meetings."

This was a new line of effort, but she did not flinch. One sunny afternoon, not long after, she found herself at the little schoolhouse on Mayhill road. The whole female population of the settlement were gathered in. The schoolhouse, with its unpainted desks, its box-stove, its bare walls, was small and

crowded. In one corner was a little organ, kept in a constant state of unrest, to the distraction of Redgold's musical ear.

On the platform was a small table, where stood a milk bottle, containing the only beauty in the place, a bunch of autumn flowers.

The mothers, with their babies, had driven many miles for the meeting. Almost all appeared to have brought the family dog. The animals, who crowded into the aisle, seemed to be particularly beligerent, and the women were in a state of dread lest a dog-fight should develop.

In one of the front desks sat a well-known old character, who insisted on making a speech from the floor, telling the ladies what a nice young man was one of Fred's opponents. Everyone agreed with her, even Redgold, for all were in fear of her temper.

"It would not be fair to the dogs," said one of the women, "to have aroused a rival quarrel."

In such a setting, Redgold delivered her maiden speech. She was very timid at first, but gained courage as she warmed to her subject. The next meeting was less difficult.

There were discouragements, days that

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were dark and dreary, and experiences far from promising. The meeting arranged for the most remote schoolhouse in the constituency fell on the night of a great wind and rain storm. The roads were in pools of water, the mud was deep. Fred reached home just before daylight, tired and heart-sore.

There were only six electors present. The chief furniture of the school was a box-stove and several lengths of pipe. As he talked, there came a gust of wind—and down came the pipes!

"The meeting was closed without ceremony," Fred added, in relating the experience. Fortunately, they never lost their sense of humor.

Thus passed the short campaign, and election day was upon them. Redgold was early at work, driving the voters to the polls. The day was not only busy, but amusing. One old man announced, from his bed, that he could not go to vote as his only pair of trousers were washed, on the line and not yet dry. Nothing daunted, Redgold sought a kindly neighbor, and a borrowed pair served the old voter.

The little Englishwoman gave Fred a vote

because she hoped that he would use his influence to get a "pub" in Talton like they had in the Old Country.

There were babies to mind while their mothers voted. At one house, Redgold was requested to pare the potatoes for noon dinner. During the last two hours of voting she felt like a gambler, with strong odds against her. Her heart throbbed as it had done in the old days, when the horses in the great Derby were rounding a final curve to victory.

At the committee rooms they waited, listening to the constant reports on the wire. Redgold augured success or failure by the sound of the voices. A hearty murmur, then prolonged cheering, roused her into activity. Thus the hours went by until the final results were in, announcing Fred's election.



## CHAPTER XIV

### UNDERSTANDING AT LAST

The weeks of strain left their mark on Redgold. From heated excitement, and days all too short for their duties, came a change to the quiet of daily routine. The end had been accomplished; it had taken of her strength. 'Twas plain to anyone, but to the eyes of love it called for action.

They were standing by the western windows, one afternoon, when Fred looked into her face with that old fondness, deepened by her recent sacrifices for him.

"Dear, we are going to change from these four walls to God's own open. 'I know a bank where wild thyme blows.' A week there will bring back a deeper bloom.

"We will hunt for the magic lake whose waters are the elixir of life. I must tell you the legend—some time as we bask, like happy animals, in the sunshine."

"Or beside a great camp-fire."

On that holiday Redgold felt that she had

become acquainted with a new Fred; he found not only "books in the running brook," but a new book, revealing a changed girl, an indefinable something, perhaps a look or an expression or a remark, instinct, with a depth of feeling before altogether lacking. It was more than association, that week in the great hills—it was that self-revealing intimacy that can be had best in God's own temples.

In an alpine meadow they chose a treed knoll for their camp, revelling in their surroundings. As the hunter's moon appeared over the crags, they made their camp-fire.

"The Indians say," remarked Redgold, "that the white man makes a big fire and sits far back. The Indian makes a small fire and sits close up."

"The Indians burn the wood from which few sparks fly."

"Well, we make the white man's fire, and I like it best. To sit back and watch these brilliant and flickering flames against the blackness of the trees has a weird attraction for me. I never tire of the fantastic scene." Listening to the night sounds of the woods, she cried: "Do you hear the coyotes barking to the moon?"

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The odor of fragrant pines, with their sense of health and well-being, was in the air. The gathering darkness filled the mountain fastness to its brim. Under the spell of the rare surroundings, Fred was inspired (a rare thing for him) to a Goldsmith quotation:

"Even now, where Alpine's solitudes ascend,  
I sit me down, a pensive hour to spend."

"This is truly a 'pensive' hour," mused Redgold. "There is something in a camp-fire that warms the heart as well as the body. I am glad you are here with me, Fred, dear." She nestled closer, with an infinite willingness of one seeking a well-known shelter. The feeling, of closeness, not physical but mental affected her. With it came a sense of unrest. One page she had not shown him—the page on which was written the name of Harold Beeson. There came to her a great urge to go over that sheet with him. She felt he would understand.

Slowly, omitting nothing, she told him the story of her association with Harold Beeson. The forest depths were steeped in darkness. Weird and restless, the flames rose higher, playing with a barbaric and fitful beauty on the upstanding rocks, on the darker patches of

stones and fallen trees. Like the old camper who may "land in the heart of things and the woods around him, heaped and dim," they felt the remoteness, the completeness of their isolation. It was a place for a soul's outpouring. Everything was "wearing a cloak of mystery."

Under its magic, and the dread of Fred's acceptance of her story, her voice trembled. She was breathless in the anguish of her endeavor. Furtively, eagerly, she scanned his face, clear and strong in the flickering light, watching for a faint shadow of doubt. Something eternal was at stake now—her faith in him.

She talked on, her voice lower and deeper, encouraged by his understanding remarks; "You could not be expected to do anything else, dear," or "I know how you must have felt, so lonely, so forlorn, so much in need of friendship," or "I'm glad he was here to give you that attention, you poor, lonely dear."

The fire softened down to a deep, red glow, sending out an occasional flare of light. She chatted on, telling of those frequent meetings, of their rides over the country trails, of that growing friendship. Fred's face, lighted by the flames, stood out, white and kindly. He, too, seemed under the spell; he, too, sensed the rich

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and stimulating association with this man. She still watched him, searching, searching for a faint quiver of mistrust. But here was only understanding, appreciation of one who had made her happy. Not a word of reproach, not a criticism, not a suspicion of his lips.

The fire burned brightly. In the blackness of the mountain-guarded night, the wavering lights became dancing spirits. How wonderful was his faith! A sense of security, of danger escaped, possessed her. Fred, the real man, so above petty jealousy, so above suggestion of wrong, was revealed.

She finished the tale, an outpouring of her heart, "and breathless, as we grow when feeling most," again searched her husband's face. "Oh, you dear," he crooned, gathering her to him, "how strong you were! It is what I would expect of you."

A great burden rolled away from her. Now there was nothing hidden, nothing unexplained. It brought them nearer, each to each was dearer. He saw her changed, a woman who "had grown in her strength," grown to an appreciation of his strength and his love. He was reaping from the seeds of Harold Beeson's stimulating friendship. He saw Redgold

as the woman that he knew she could become. Even the kiss that she received was holy in his eyes. "like the benediction that follows after prayer."

How much brighter the sun appeared on the following day; the balmy air seemed balmyer. There was a different feeling in her heart. She saw Fred as a man, nearer, the ideal nearer the dream in her heart. Before, she had a pride, an interest, even a fondness for him, but not a love. There was still a memory of the old love. Now her sudden understanding of her husband completely changed her.

If he had doubted her—what then? She would have hardened, have seen him as not above the common type. She would have looked upon shattered and broken ideals. Her query would have been: What is the use of struggle? What is the use of attempting to reach a pinnacle in life? Where the satisfaction when life without faith, without trust, is valueless? Where the compensation when all the scruples and sacrifices and tearing asunder of human desires, for the sake of ideals, amounts to the same nothingness in the end.

But no need of this! She had proved him and he had not been found wanting. He had

measured up! This absolute revelation had broken down the last barrier. Her joy came from a source so fathomless that she could not name it. She had never felt so deeply alive. They were one in a final sense, that made of the nearness of marriage a sacred, reverent thing.

Ineffably sweet was the thought of her perfect trust—ineffably sweet, and hers forever. It was their final union of hearts.

Around the camp-fire, the following night, the conversation drifted. Redgold finally told the legend of the magic lake, of the mighty hunter who never grew old. Each spring he disappeared from his tribe, returning in the autumn with a more marked spirit and appearance of youth. His brothers begged him to tell what secret magic he had discovered. He could give them only a tale of life in the wilds, living, like the wild goats and eagles, on the high peaks, sleeping in the pine forests, drinking of the mountain streams. Doubtful, the belief grew that the youthful Indian had found the magic lake whose waters were the elixir of life.

"And it is true! We have found magic or charm, or what you will, in these mountains. I

notice that there is a return of your girlish bloom. You are being made over, dear."

"And you!—you are a boy again!"—the tone said more than the words.

Day by day brought fresher, deeper color to her cheeks. The hidden lake had had its mysterious influence, and the joyous, soul-comforting life had assisted it. Fred saw it, that returning bloom, and with it something he had scarcely dared to hope. He had known that she admired him, but she did not love him. Now he felt that he moved something in her heart. But he did not realize the depths of it, that it was what no one else had ever touched.

They walked many miles each day, climbed the steeps, followed a deer through the woods, picked flowers, almost in the snow. With Meredith, they found: "Sweet are the shy recesses of the woodland . . . From silence into silence, things move."

They came upon a mountain tea-house on the shore of a lake. "There is our hidden lake," Fred said. Resting amid the beauties, they fed the chipmunks on the rocks, ate thick sandwiches, drank tea, and enjoyed the wondrous view—two mountain tarns below, emerald and turquoise and all of nature's colors.



But his vacation must end. He wished her, however, to remain near the mysterious lake. A rainy day settled the problem. Just over the Divide was the chalet on the lake. To it they went and, as they journeyed along, he opened before her his project: he to return to "Fair-acres," she to remain for a few days more in those health-giving surroundings.

Alone, she realized the change in herself—so restless, so discontented, seeking, seeking, to find some distraction, to fill the gap in her husband's absence. She climbed the hills, watched the tourists play snowball at the snow line. In the higher altitudes she searched for new specimens of wild flowers. Chatting with the mountain guides was a delight. It gave her material for stories. Yet everything had lost its charm, even the solitude of the woods. Her mind was always on her absent husband.

The mere people about the chalet made her the more lonely. She could not help but dwell on the difference between her feeling now and when Fred went to France. Before she was filled with sorrow and pride. Now she felt as if something had been cut out of her being. With the big pull at her heart, she determined to return to him at once.

Came the last night. In a softly clinging sapphire gown, her red-gold hair piled high, she made, as she entered the dining-room, a picture of grace and beauty.

Choosing a table, partly hidden by a large palm, she gazed, in a wearied, uninterested way, upon the joyous, changing throng of pleasure-seekers. The softly-shaded light, the orchestra playing a dreamy waltz, the well-groomed people, had an effect which took her out of herself.

There were several parties of English people at the tables, and their cultured voices fell pleasantly on her ears. Some distinguished-appearing guests at a near table attracted her attention, and presently she became unconsciously interested in them. A tall, soldierly figure caught her eye. His face was hidden from her, but she found herself striving, mentally, to picture it. Somehow she knew that it must be fine and noble, in keeping with his martial bearing. The more she looked, the more familiar the form appeared.

Snatches of conversation came to her. Without knowing it, she was eavesdropping. Then voice from out of the past, a voice she knew and loved, thrilled her afresh: "So the 10th

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won the All-Army match."

Her heart throbbed. She could not be mistaken. She knew that voice. Something told her: "It must be Gorrie, dear old Gorrie, her loved brother."

The blinding tears rushed to her eyes. She could not control herself. The lump in her throat almost choked her. Yet, on the other side of the palm were gaiety and chatter and laughter.

She was brought back to reality by the waiter's inquiry as to her further needs. Instead of replying, she handed him a note, hastily scrawled. With beating heart, and body quivering with restrained excitement, she said: "Go to the next table and ask if Lord Gordon Redman is there. If so, give him this note."

The moments seemed hours to her. There was a murmur of suppressed conversation. Then the well-known voice of her brother: "I am he. Where is she?"

A chair was pushed aside. She heard two or three hasty steps, and her brother stood before her.

"Oh, Redgold, my little sister! I have found you!" he cried.

The fullness of her heart stopped her lips. She spoke only through her eyes, glistening with tears of thankfulness. Gradually her self-possession returned. Her incoherent remarks ceased, and she began to question as to how and when and by what means her brother had so unexpectedly arrived.

She showered questions upon him, scarce giving him time to answer: where was he going and what did he intend to do?

Out of all the jungle of conversation finally emerged the proposition that her brother, who had come to the West to find her, should go with her to "Fairacres" to see the new home and husband and her family.

"Gorrie, you will find in my husband a wonderful man," she said, "and my two darling children even more wonderful. You will love our farm-home, and find in it a delightful atmosphere of peace and comfort and joy. So come to 'Fairacres' you must, and at once."

## CHAPTER XV

### REVELATIONS

Lord Gordon Redman was surprised at the ease with which he fell into the round of life at "Fairacres." He found there his own pursuits in new attire. In tweed coat, buckskin breeches and pigskin leggings, with the khaki trousers and sombrero which he readily cultivated, he was a familiar figure in the vicinity.

On his tramps, gun under his arm, "Sonny" was his regular companion. First came the fox-terrier, inevitable precursor of his little master; then "Sonny," a real Westerner, and Lord Gordon, obedient to his nephew's direction. "Pronto," the setter, was at their heels.

Surrounded and encompassed by the circles of mad delight which "Nip" wove about them, they crossed the newly-ploughed ground, travelled fields of stubble, shot an occasional rabbit or turned up a covey of partridges. All the while "Sonny" kept up constant chatter, endeavoring to give all possible information. The boy was the Englishman's delight. Redgold's

home and general environment quite pleased him, too. They relieved his mind of the fear of finding her situation a blow to the family pride. He saw them even alluring to one accustomed to the refinements of English life. The mere contrast was attractive.

The weeks sped on, and it was November. Though the prairies and foothills had taken on winter's sombre appearance, the days were balmy and sun-filled. "Fairacres" had a new beauty in the mellow light of early evening. Lord Gordon stood on the veranda, noting the pleasant stillness of the air.

He was restless. His eyes were fixed on vacancy. There came a steadfast, rapt look. Visions of the past flitted before him—his English home, his beautiful mother, his star-eyed sister with her flaming hair. What a puzzle she was! Under the influence of the serene night and the force of his thoughts, his determination mounted. He would have an explanation of her strange behavior! Why had she refused to marry his boyhood chum, Jack Travers, and almost on the eve of their marriage? Why had she left her lovely home, broken her father's heart, turned so bitterly against her mother, humiliated her family,

shocked society, fled to the new world? She thought and felt so deeply; she was so upright and so fine! Why had she done this? His time of departure was near. He would know the reason of it all!

"I am a Redman, too, dear Redgold," he said, as they discussed the subject in his mind. "I surely have the right, above all others, to know why you acted as you did. I have not yet told you that, I was with dear old Jack Travers when he died. As he lay, shattered and dying, his dear hand clasped in mine, he moaned: 'I'm going West, old man; you'll forgive me; you'll not need to forgive her.'"

"Then I suspected some wrongdoing on his part. There, at the death of my boyhood chum, I vowed that I would seek you out. You cannot deny me. You cannot deny the last wish of the man you say you loved."

Redgold's face was cold and drawn; another touch with Jack; another message from the dead. Strange ghosts of the past were before her; bitter memories for years had kept her from her husband. She had finally buried them, almost forgotten them. Why should they come now to break down the bridge that she had built, at last, for the road to happi-

ness? Why disturb this settled relationship with her husband by laying bare the old hurt? Jack was gone; her mother was gone; she was the only one of the three so deeply concerned who was left. She thought that all, or nearly all, of the bitter memories were obliterated. And she had filled the places with a love for her husband.

That week in the woods, when they had a very soul communion, had brought about a complete fellowship. Now the old wound would be opened again; she would be down in the depth in this fresh review of the past. She saw a possible break in the bridge of her happiness. That happiness was so new, so fresh, so completely filling. She feared that the re-opening might shatter the elysium of her life.

Yet Gorrie continued his urging. He reminded her of his deep interest in all that concerned her, and pointed out that he had come to her bearing Jack's last request. It was a duty, to her people, to herself.

As she considered the whole situation, the past and the present, there crept into her mind a great weariness. She was so tired of carrying that burden alone. Her cherished and much studied philosophy gave her small com-



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fort. And had she been fair to her brother to so steal out of his life? Like a flash came a sudden understanding of her conduct.

To think, too, of easing her mind by telling him, her dear old Gorrie! If only she had the strength to go through with it! She would reveal what she had thought would never again cross her lips. Only when she told Fred had she broken the seal.

Thus she debated with herself, while Gorrie pleaded with her to ease the strain on his mind.

How deep had sunk her father's accusation that she had not run true to blood!

She walked back and forth, clenching her hands, shaking her head, in deep distress. Well let Gorrie judge when he heard the story. She would tell him!

"I think, Gorrie, that the loss of an ideal is the greatest calamity that can come to any life," she burst out, as she seated herself.

"My ideals," she continued, anguish in her eyes, "were shattered, and by two whom I almost worshipped. You say I have not been fair to you; yet what I did was, as I thought, for the best. But the burden of this secret has been almost too much for me—not my own wrongdoing, but that of others."

Moving up and down the room, he paused, laying his hand gently on her shoulder, as he murmured: "Dear little sister!"

She hesitated, her head in her hands. Looking up at her eager, waiting brother, she went on in a low voice: "You loved your chum, Jack Travers; and, oh dear God, so did I! Yet I could not marry him. I fled from the dear old home without explaining my strange behavior, and hoping that I might die and find release from it all:

"Gorrie," she cried, rising suddenly, grasping his arm, an earnest pleading in her eyes. "Before you know, think it over. Shall I tell you, or will you let me take this story of a dear one's sin to my grave?"

"Dear little girl, for Jack's sake, for mother's sake, for your own, tell me."

At the name of her mother she winced, but, recovering herself at once, said: "It will crush you as it has crushed me throughout the years. Let us slip away, together, to our dear old home and my last Christmas there. We had a delightful house party that year and followed all the pretty customs. I never forget a detail of it.

"I still remember how beautiful mother looked at dinner—do you? Her delicate mauve chiffon velvet dinner gown was enhanced by my Jack's orchids. How proud father was of her, and, dear Gorrie, how you adored her!

"The following morning I met mother in the blue drawing-room to discuss my trousseau. Do you recall that Jack and I were to be married in February? My wedding gown was to be a soft, clinging material. I was to carry white roses and wear a wreath of real orange blossoms and dear Grandma Redman's wedding veil.

"Jack and I had planned a honeymoon, and then we were to sail for India. Mother was to come in the autumn and spend the winter with us."

As the tears welled up in Redgold's eyes, her brother looked at her in wonder. "Do not bring our beautiful mother into your story, dear. We cannot discuss her with anything that savors of the sordid."

"It is necessary, Gorrie. That is why the tale is so heart-breaking, so tragic."

He resumed his pacing, slowly, slowly, stooped, like a man carrying a constantly growing burden.

"I don't wish to hurt you, God knows; but I knew mother better than you ever could hope to. We are both of her blood, and be assured that I would not vary one iota from the truth; I owe that much to her, and I owe it no less to myself.

"You remember that she was a very beautiful woman. I have never seen anyone so lovely. I realize that she was a woman who thoroughly knew her world. Her gift of beauty as well as her position, justified every success and excused every failing. She attracted all men, and I suppose the best of men are part devil where a beautiful woman is concerned.

"You will recall that her standards appeared to be high. She and father were, apparently, an ideal couple."

"Where is this leading to, Redgold?"

"You will understand after a little. You know you insisted on hearing this."

She was quiet for an instant.

"Go on," he whispered, his face almost gray.

"There gradually came to me an understanding that mother's life was full of schemes."

"Redgold!" he sharply exclaimed.

"Don't be shocked, my brother. I know what

I am saying. She always had several men in her train, and, despite myself, during the last few months of my engagement, I thought that Jack might be one of them. After each of his week-end visits, this dreadful feeling would return. Try as I might, I could not down it. I strove to argue with myself—ashamed, disgusted, that I should, even in thought, cast a reflection on my mother or doubt my lover."

"What you are going to tell me can't be true," he gasped, as he sat down near her.

She continued, as if she had not heard him: "The evening after Christmas, most of the guests retired early. Mother told me that I looked fatigued and must go to bed at ten o'clock. I recall that father asked me to ride and try his new hunter the next morning.

"You are the skilled horsewoman of the family," he said, and kissed me tenderly. "To think I am going to lose my little daughter!" he murmured, as he patted my head.

"I will still be your daughter, dear father, even if I am Jack's wife," I answered.

"Always remember that you are a Redman, dear little girl," he went on, and, whatever life may give you, live up to your early training. (I think I have, Gorrie!) Be as good a wife as

your mother has been and you will be safe and secure. Now run along, and be down with the birds in the morning. Jack may take you to your dressing-room.' ”

“You have a vivid memory of the time, Redgold,” Gorrie remarked. “I sit in terror until you come to the point.”

“Have patience, dear. I must give the circumstances in detail, so that you can grasp the whole situation. Jack and I went slowly up the stairs, and then his good-night kiss. How little I thought that it was the last he would ever give me! How little I thought that our romance was over! I prepared for bed, so happy, and quickly fell asleep.

“Strange, I was awakened by the old clock striking one. You remember the old clock?—and the echoes on the stairs and the shafts of light on the landing. They are all so clear in my mind.

“It was such an unusual thing for me to awaken. I lay for some time, wide-eyed, and then crept out to watch the moon. Do you remember how we loved the moonlight, especially if we could watch the moon rise over Elkhorn Hill? On this night I thought of our

lovely 'moon-lady,' and crept out to watch her rise again. I could not see well from my bedroom window, so quietly stole along the corridor to the circular window in the old east wing. There I sat on the window-ledge, hidden behind the palms.

"The moon, just over the hill, was shedding its rays over meadow and woodland, and oh, it was so peaceful and I was so happy. Strange how close are joy and sadness! Then I noticed that Jack's room was just opposite. He had the Indian room. You remember the proverb: He who would marry a daughter of the house of Redman must sleep in the Indian room.

"I thought of Jack, so dear and kind, and wondered if he were dreaming of me. He told me he often had sweet dreams of me. How baseless my suspicions appeared to me then! How unworthy I was of him, to have, for an instant, doubted him! Together we would watch the wonderful moonlight in India, I thought. I prayed that God would keep him safe and make me a worthy wife.

"Upon my thoughts came the sound of pattering feet. For a moment I did not know what to do. I felt so foolish, and knew what mother would say if she found me there. For

the first time I discovered that I had nerves, and they were strained to the utmost.

"All the while I heard a figure moving furtively along, and it finally came into view."

Suddenly ceasing, she bowed her head.

"Gorrie, I cannot tell you more," her voice quivered.

Then her body was convulsed with sobs as she moaned: "Oh, Mother! Mother!"

He leaned over, laying his arm about her shoulder. She felt a strength from him. Clearly he knew. The assurance gave her courage.

"Don't ask me who it was! You know who it was! It was mother!"

Shaking with the strain of her tale, she finally raised herself and continued: "I thought she must be walking in her sleep, and gazed, spell-bound. Only my fear of having her know I was behind those palms kept me from rushing out to her. But I saw that she was awake, for, in the path of a silvery moonbeam, she stopped to listen and then crept on.

"She was so lovely in that white moonlight, in a rose silk dressing gown thrown over her night robe, her hair rippling about her."

"Oh, my dear, I know what you are going to



tell me." He stood up, his face white and grim. "Surely not that!"

"Don't make it harder for me. It's too terrible! I could hardly believe my eyes. I wondered if there were some kink in my brain, as I saw her, quietly, stealthily, like a thief, move along the corridor, and, oh God!—stop at Jack's door!"

"You . . . you saw . . . that!" — scarcely words, more a breathing.

"I feared that she would hear the beating of my frightened heart. Was my beloved ill? The door was quietly opened. He had evidently been waiting for her. She was gathered into his arms, as he kissed her lips, her eyes, her bare shoulders. For a moment they stood in the doorway in a silent embrace."

"In God's name, Redgold, what are you saying? Are you insane? This is too terrible to be possible."

She went on, regardless of the agonized voice of her brother.

"The moon seemed to mock my misery and shock, as it shed a brighter ray of its silvery light across the old hall, as if to be sure that I should see all quite clearly. Then I heard Jack's whisper: My darling, I have waited so

long for you!"

"She answered: 'Victor was so slow in going to sleep that I could not get away before.'

"Outside the moonbeams cast a wide and tender light, making the common things bright and beautiful. But, oh, the beam she threw across that corridor made my life dark and dismal. I wondered then, I wondered since, as I gaze on radiant moonlight scenes, how unkind that inconstant moon can be."

There was utter silence. The tense moment was too fraught with horror for mere words.

"Oh, brother!" Redgold burst out. "May you never suffer as I did. The door was closed. I, broken and crushed, crouched behind the palms. The old clock still ticked on."

Gorrie arose, his face ashen, his breath coming in short gasps "You must be mad. This is surely the imagining of a diseased brain. Mother and Jack! My mother and my boyhood chum! Impossible! Criminal!"

He paced the floor, wiping great drops of perspiration from his forehead.

"It is all too true, Gorrie. I hoped I might awake to find it the dream of a diseased brain or some hideous nightmare. What a tragedy it was for me, you can see. I wished to die. I

thought life was something different. Like Tantalus, I had the cup of my life's pleasure dashed from my lips, and by my mother!"

Throwing back his head, the fighting Red-man blood to the surface, he struck the table with his clenched fist. The sound sent a dull echo across the room. "Oh, that you had told me! I would have shot the cad for the dog he was!"

"That is one of the reasons why I could not tell you."

"Well, Jack Travers is dead; but, as God is my witness, if he were alive, I would seek him out. No corner of the earth could hide him. Why does God let such men live?"

"Don't be too hard on him, Gorrie. He has redeemed himself."

Gorrie felt a shuddering sensation; his face was in a dull red flush. Again he struck the table with his clenched fist, his body moving back and forth, in his agony of mind.

"Oh, girl!" he moaned. "You should have told me! You should have told me! But our mother! Our mother! To think that I clasped that man's hand, gave him my comradeship, after his betrayal of my family! Think of it!"

He sat down, weak and trembling, accept-

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ing the glass of water that Redgold held out to him.

"Drink this, dear," she whispered, "and brace up. There is nothing to do but face the truth. I know well how dreadful it is."

He was so overcome that she finally said: "Have courage, Gorrie. It is the best way to help me."

He looked up at her. Suddenly her suffering came to him. He visioned her, with her Dresden beauty, struggling through the years, carrying her dreadful knowledge, hating her life. How she must have despised that old world, his world, that had robbed her of youth and hope and happiness!

"Poor little Redgold," he cried, caressing her hair. "What you have been through! Finish the story."

She talked in low voice, exhausted. "I stayed on there by the window for a while, chilled and horror-stricken. The clock still ticked on: 'Never, forever, forever, never.' The night beauties were gone from the face of the earth, and my soul seemed forever robbed of beauty and peace. In those hours I was changed from a bright, joyous girl into a broken, betrayed woman. I gazed out of the

window. One leap and I could end all of this agony. I prayed for strength not to play the part of a coward.

"How long I remained I do not know. All ability to think or move seemed gone. Somehow I reached my room; but all I could see was mother at Jack's door, and, like a death-knell in my ears, the constant repetition: 'My darling! I waited for you.'"

Gorrie bowed his head. In his anguish he murmured: "Father, poor father! So quick to anger, so unrelenting, so jealous of his family name, of his honor."

"You know father adored mother. To tell him of her sin—how could I?"

"I see; I understand."

"Had I gone to him then—would he have believed it? It would have been inhuman, barbarous; there would have been murder; better far as it is; let someone keep ideals, belief, faith."

"My dear little sister! Terrible! Terrible! What you have endured!"

"What else could I do but endure, and in silence?"

Gorrie was lost in thought. Then he broke out: "Father said you did not run true to

blood; in his ignorance, he believed you had not lived up to the family traditions. Another example of wrong judgment, another instance of making false charges. But you did! You saved him from the destruction of his own faith, of his creed of love and honor."

Back and forth he walked, hands clenched, head down, lips quivering. Finally, with an air of resignation, he said: "Well let us have the end."

"There was the next day; it stands out as one of the dark times of my life," she ran on, but with an unexpected calm. The worst was over and it was not so difficult to tell the tale.

"I found that the affections that grow up in five years cannot be entirely killed in five minutes. They were withered and dying, but not dead. How I suffered! Restless, tossing, I tried to sleep. I shuddered at the call to meals. I needed nothing, only to be left alone until I had gathered strength of mind to meet them. Jack came to inquire. I told my maid to tell him that I was much shocked last night and unable to rest.

"A little later mother came! 'Jack tells me you were shocked last night,' she said. 'I can't understand it. What happened?'

"Distracted as I was, I could see that she was striving to learn whether I had seen anything.

"At the instant I pulled myself together. Like a flash came the thought, and I said: 'I had a bad nightmare last night, and it seemed as real as though it were true.'

"She looked at me, and I could see a troubled expression.

"Clearly, she was weighing that nightmare. But I changed the subject by saying: 'I'm drowsy now; but after a little I shall be down to dinner, quite myself.' She took the hint, and I had time to compose myself.

When I entered the dining-room, Jack was standing by the fire. He rushed over to greet me. I turned away. He seemed startled, and yet scarcely surprised. Perhaps mother and he had discussed the 'nightmare.'

"'You're changed. What's wrong?'

"'Oh, Jack, if your heart does not tell you, then I will after dinner.'

"We were soon riding down the old Beech Drive, so rich, for us, in associations.

"The moon had risen. It was the same moon—but! We came to the old bridge, with its happy memories. It seemed the fittest

place. We dismounted. As we rested over the railing of the bridge, the water gurgled pleasantly among the rocks, and the moonbeams made lights and shades on its moving surface. For a few minutes we were silent. I waited for him. He waited for me. At last he broke out: 'What's happened?'

"Fortunately the moon lighted his face, while mine was in darkness. This was to be 'the end-all.' Perhaps I was brutally brusque.

" 'Where was mother last night, Jack?'

"I saw his face quiver. He turned away from me. Then he pulled himself together as he stammered: 'I don't understand you. What—do—you—mean?'

" 'Jack, I know everything. Your conduct shows I am right in my conclusions. You know what I mean. You understand. How long this has gone on I do not know, but this is the end for us. Our ways part now.'

"He stood, scarce knowing what to do. Perhaps, for the first time, he realized the whole wickedness of his conduct. He may have seen that his deception had been so atrocious that it could not be forgiven; but yet, he begged and pleaded with me. He could not understand that our romance and our dear plans had



come to such an abrupt end.

"I told him that he could thank God that I was a Redman; that his iniquity and hers would be hidden, forever, from the world. I made it clear that his conduct had ended any possibility of our union; that no self-respecting person, and certainly no self-respecting daughter, could, in my place, now marry him.

"I shall never forget his drawn face, Gorrie. As I looked at him, a feeling of pity, which, you know, is akin to love, came over me. Perhaps his pleadings may have helped it. But, as I glanced at his face for a moment, the moonlight, somehow, reminded me of his deception—a long continued one; and that white light seemed to show me what life with a deceiver for a husband would be. They say the moon is changeable, Gorrie; but that moonlight strengthened me in my resolution.

"I look back and wonder that I was given that element of determination that helped me through. It came to me that life with him would be utterly base, without belief in him. The realization of my lost faith was like death. It was the wrecking of all that I thought was real in our associations.

"I would say to myself: This cannot be

true . . . of course not. I would go back over all these recollections of him as I thought he was. Everything was founded on the most certain trust in him. That surety was priceless. To know it false was the keenest torture I ever experienced.

"Until within a few months, I have still loved him. Don't misunderstand me. I loved the man I thought he was. But that man died the night my mother walked along the corridor.

"It was better to look upon the man that was left, the man whose heart I had seen. What a blow he dealt to my conception of him! It was hard to see him so far away, so diminished, to watch the halo I had placed on him disappear. The undeveloped soul, the cramped mind, the absolute lack of manhood that he revealed by his action, turned my love for the real Jack Travers into a feeling of horror.

"I had known another Jack. I had seen the man he might become, and that is the man I have loved. What a pity that he had not allowed the instincts of fine feeling the space to live! There was something sad, something tragic in looking upon the wreck of all that

was upright in such a man. He might have been something noble. I have kept the image of what might have been, that is the Jack I loved.

"I reared an ideal and gave that ideal the love I supposed I was giving Jack. Now that image, that ideal, has faded. Strange how unmoved the thought of him leaves me. Out of this chastening, out of this suffering, sorrow, disappointment, has come my happiness, my joy of life."

"Dear," Gorrie broke in on her flow of words, "I see you ennobled, glorified by it. You have found something that I cannot name—that inner light; it is surely the true happiness. Out of this evil has come good."

"Something very precious has survived—the assurance that life is not all base, that there is still faith and trust and richness of living for those who seek. It is all embodied for me in my husband. There is abundant life. There is the complete fulfilment that I sought."

He looked at her, so changed, so calm, so satisfied. What miraculous thing had happened? What influence Fred must have! How thought or mention of him could transfigure

her!

Walking back and forth, slowly, pensively, he felt a curious pleasure in her radiance.

They had talked long hours, all the night through. She arose and crossed to the window, noting the light in the eastern sky.

"Look, Gorrie!" she cried, her face expressing her deep feeling. "See the light in the sky. It is the dawn, a promise of new life for us."

## CHAPTER XVI

### "TIME AT LENGTH MAKES ALL THINGS EVEN"

Each tick of the tiny clock warned Redgold that Gorrie's hour of departure was near. In the one short week, following her revelations, the bond between brother and sister had been more strongly welded. Now there was a pull at her heart-strings; her eyes were full of curious longing—an expression of sorrow and yet of joy.

Gorrie's roseate plans left her breathless: his intended explanations to her father; his desire that her confidence in her old world be restored; his determination to have her and her children in England; his resolve to reunite the family.

They shared the exhilaration of the rosy future that he painted; they appreciated the responsibilities entailed. She would go to England in the spring. There was a complete understanding of the course they would pursue. The aged father must live on his treasure.

## REDGOLD

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ed memories, the very bread of life of his old age; not an ideal should be shattered. That was Gorrie's task: to explain and yet not to explain.

The months flew by on wings. Every day, every hour, was preparing for that meeting, for spring, for England:

"Where the dark shall be light  
And the wrong made right."

Mid-May found them in England—Redgold and the children. On a radiant afternoon, escorted by Gorrie, they passed along the century-old-driveway to Roselea Hall. Old memories crowded upon Redgold; at every turn appeared familiar sights of her childhood. On either side of the drive were acres of woodland, kept in the natural state for shooting. There was little change; the birds gave the same old greeting. She longed to caress the old, twisted trees—how often had she dreamed beneath their branches! It seemed yesterday that she had walked among the oaks, with

their far-flung boughs, or in about the dark spruce or beeches, with their foliage sweeping to the ground.

Through the trees were little knolls, gay with the bloom of English bluebells. Farther along the drive stretched the gardens—May-trees, a mass of pink and white blossoms, intermingled with an occasional syringa that filled the air with its fragrance. The lavender of the lilac challenged the golden glory of the laburnum.

Around the curve of the driveway, Roselea Hall came into view—a stately mansion, whose broad windows reflected the brilliant gold of the sunlight and the bright green of the lawns. In contrast was the sombre ivy that clung to the veranda pillars and stone walls, adding a mellow dignity to the old home.

Redgold's pulses quickened. Her hour had come!

"Take the children for a stroll in the garden," she said to Gorrie. "You have done your work. You have paved the way for me. It will be better, after all these years, for father and I to meet alone."

She entered.

## REDGOLD

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In the soft glow of the drawing-room fire stood an old man, bent and feeble, leaning heavily on an ebony cane. His silvery hair was thin; his velvet smoking jacket hung loosely on his shoulders. He was like an old picture, that of her dearly-loved grandfather. On the withered face was the flush of expectancy.

Footsteps dulled in the Persian rug, she glided to his side. Then it came at last, the precious, the longed-for meeting.

"Father!" she cried.

It seemed with difficulty that he lifted his head. His faded old eyes smiled a welcome as he held out his trembling hands.

"Redgold" he murmured. "My little Redgold!"

After a time they sat down before the fire, hand linked in hand, watching the fitful flames. Each seemed reluctant to break the magic period of silence, lest it should dissolve in dream. In the warmth that flowed through her, it appeared that all else had vanished, and that, together, they were watching the little girl she used to be.

"Come to the window," he finally said. "My eyes are not very good."



## REDGOLD

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He gazed long into her face. "So like your mother! so like your mother!—her eyes, her luxuriant hair."

He turned to the fire and, with an unsteady murmur: "I can see you by the hearth, in your little chair, and your doll on the stand in front of you, the fire shining on your bright, golden hair. You were a dreamy child, always weaving fancies around your dolls and toys and the people about you."

Redgold listened to his musings. All the while she thought: Is this all that time has left of the big, soldierly father? Gently kissing his brow, she stroked his soft old hands. Seating herself on a low stool, she bowed her head on his knee and sent up a prayer of thankfulness that she had not lived in vain. She had saved this dear old father from that tragic knowledge. She had enabled him to keep his idol on a pedestal.

How long she sat in sweet communion she would never know. Time seemed to stand still. Yet, in those moments of intense joy, she was paid in full for her years of suffering. She was home again; she was her father's daughter.

It was he who finally broke the precious spell. "Your children are the only grandchild-

ren God has given me. Where are they?"

"I wanted to see you first, alone dear father, so Gorrie took them into the garden."

"My dear Gorrie, always thoughtful. I do not know, in my loneliness, what I should have done without him."

So the dear father had been lonely, too!

"I am glad he has been with you, father. He would make your life brighter."

"He has, he has! All these years my little girl has been away from home. Why did you not come back before, Redgold?"

She realized that the years had drawn a veil over his memory, mellowing his sorrows, placing a halo around the sweetness of his life.

As the pendulum swung back, he said: "You must come with me to your mother's grave."

Redgold felt a singular, heavy coolness in the air. The words had a surprising effect on her. With the feeling of perfect happiness with her husband, the understanding with her father, and the thought that to Jack's misconduct her happiness was due, she had felt, without actually asking herself, that her attitude to her mother had lost every atom of bitterness. Everyone else in the troubles of her life had been completely forgiven. She was ashamed

and shocked to find, deep down in her heart, certain roots of anger.

On her musings came a merry childish voice, and little June ran to her mother's side.

"My grandchild!" Lord Redman cried, and the child came forward, very shy and sweet, as he held out his hands.

"Redgold, my little girl," and he caressed her sunny hair.

"I am June; mummy is Redgold."

"So she is! So she is! I thought mummy was a little girl again. Now fetch your brother and let me see the one who may carry on the old home and title."

June looked, with wonder in her eyes, and went immediately for "Sonny." Touching was it to see the old Earl stand up to receive his grandson. What a picture they made in the dim light—venerable age and vivid, abundant youth! The one who wanted only to rest and have his own about him before it was too late; the other with aliveness and the joy of living in every movement.

Laying his wrinkled hands on the boy's head; he was overcome with emotion. "Thank you, dear Redgold, for my grandchildren." He held out his hand and included her in the em-

brace.

At that moment Gorrie entered the room, suddenly halting to gaze on the scene. The old Earl looked up pride shining on his countenance.

"My dear boy," he said, "are they not wonderful? I wish your dear mother could have lived to see this day."

"We are so happy that you have lived to see it, dear father."

"I hope we can persuade your sister to spend the rest of her days in the old home. I need her and my grandchildren," the old man continued. "I need them to brighten my last days."

"I'm afraid Redgold's husband will need her in that new country. She received a cable, since landing, telling her that he has been made a cabinet minister. He has big work for his adopted country before him now."

"Well, well—he has prospered. He has grown. I'm glad, my dear, very glad and happy."

"Thank you, dear father. The new world has been good to us, but we have worked hard. Of course, there is no royal road to accomplishment."

"I know that, my dear; but that country must be a young man's paradise."

"It is," Gorrie answered.

"It is a land where a man may rise from obscurity to honor—not for what his father was, but for what he himself is and can do."

"And think of the poor man's privileges!" Gorrie cried. "A poor man can ride and fish and shoot as easily as the rich."

"Is there no such thing as poaching?" the old Earl asked.

Redgold remembered the men her father had caused to be sent to prison for shooting rabbits.

"No, father; my husband and I, even in our poorest days, could fish and shoot, all for a two-dollar license."

"I shall never forget my days of sport, shooting deer in the foothills of the Rockies," added Gorrie. "I wish you could have been with us, dear father."

"I may some day, my boy. I think I shall go out and see my daughter's home in that great country."

Redgold looked at the dear old face and wondered if God would spare him to see her Western home. How she hoped that it might

be.

"We are fatiguing your sister," said the father. "She should go to her room and rest. Will you see to it, Gorrie?"

Putting an arm around June and taking "Sonny's" hand, he seated them beside him at the window. Taking June on his knee, he said: "I will keep these jewels with me and become acquainted with them."

What a pleasant picture remained in Redgold's mind as she went up the stairs—June nestling, cosily, in the father's arms, her golden curls mingling with his silver locks; "Sonny" looking at his grandfather with a proud, pleased gaze. This brave man, this great soldier, was his own grandfather.

The old Earl had a new lease of life. He strolled about the house and garden with the lively children, telling them tales—of India, of the tiger hunts, of the old Mugger who lived in the Ganges, of the life of the soldier and the sailor.

Flitting about under the trees, gathering spring flowers, they listened to stories of mummy's girlhood days, or "Sonny" talked of his homeland; of the rabbit hunts, the wild horses, and life in the foothills.

On her new hunter, Gorrie's gift, Redgold rode along the country lanes, as in her girlhood days. Yet she could not succeed in appearing the girl of early years—not so much because she was growing closer to forty, but life had taught her too much to take on, again, that girlish abandon.

Her whole-hearted gaiety had changed to something deeper—a quiet contentment. She had given over the puzzling, irritating musings that had filled so much of her spare hours. Often did she repeat Maeterlinck's words: "Evil is the good we do not understand." She was satisfied to accept that and let the whole strange puzzle rest.

She found herself looking at the old accustomed things and people, with new eyes. Even the songs of the birds held an intimacy of understanding, on a new note. There was freshened strength for her in those rides over the country lanes. She often followed the old Beech Drive. Many rides had she enjoyed under those great trees! Searching, she found the tree on which was cut, with a penknife, the word: "Nirvana," signed "J.T." and "R. R."

Jack's words came to her; "We will tell the old beech our secret, and when we return from

India, a middle-aged couple, we will visit here and look on the initials that we carved in our youth."

Her farewell ride, on the day before she left her old home, flashed across her memory. She was tempted to cut away that piece of bark. It was so bitter, then, to look upon it. But she had cried: "Keep my secret, old beech." In her calm security and happiness, she so pitied that lonely, distraught girl.

Reviewing those old associations gave her a deeper courage, a more profound satisfaction. The calm of which she had been conscious when she found the real Fred was with her now. She felt it, gloriously, during that week in the mountains; and later, in the deep, blue night, or in the early morning on the prairie, it was with her. Then she linked it, romantically, with the wide calm of nature.

Surrounded and engulfed in her happiness, the old scenes possessed for her the same appeal as old letters or personal diaries—something very rich, to be looked upon, to be caressed and again stored away.



## CHAPTER XVII

### A GARDEN OF MEMORIES

June had come, and with it rose-time. Red-gold was living again her girlhood days in the old haunts. Every spot has its associations. She was surrounded by a pageant of the old days. The scenes changed, and each with its story, so old, yet so fresh, that she felt a "sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."

Of all the lures, none was more redolent with memories than the rose-garden, with its arbor, the "pleached bower" of her girlhood. The familiar entrance, with its rustic archway, hidden in jessamine and honeysuckle, beckoned her as of old.

There was a sad sweetness in the associations of this trysting place. She knew she should avoid it. She resolved that she would. But, by a strange contradiction of action, she found herself frequently there. Every sweet-scented flower, every blossoming rose-tree, every climbing Rambler reminded her of the

past.

It was truly a garden of memories. There she had lingered with Jack Travers when he asked her to become his bride. The Druschki queen of white roses, spoke to her of wedding dreams; La France, with its red bloom, was typical of the rosy future she and Jack had planned in India; the homeliness of the tea-rose suggested the quiet, uneventful, joyous married association.

She passed the old sun-dial, with its mossy base, and, in fancy, saw two lovers leaning upon it, casting their shadows, seeming to stop the hand of time. As she mounted, slowly, the marble steps leading to the old arbor, she saw, down the vista of pears, those lovers sitting in happy communion.

Through the soft air came the full-volume choir of feathered songsters; the sweet flute-notes of the blackbird, the trill of the thrush, the cuckoo calling to his mate. All stirred old echoes in her mind.

She stood there, inhaling the sweet perfumes of the garden, seeing, amongst the roses, those figures of the past, "moving shadows," mental but very real—her mother, Jack Travers, her brother, Lady Catherine.

Picture after picture of her former life crowded upon her. Strange that they gave her not even a momentary return of the agitation of former times.

As though an onlooker on scenes that did not concern her, she allowed the panorama of the past to unroll before her. She saw the man and the woman, who looked like her, but there was no magnetic association, not the slightest response. Plainly, the fire had gone out and even the ashes were dead. Her heart was filled with a great satisfaction that, in this supreme test, she found these ashes so cold. She knew now that she had grown up to a different valuation of those things that made life. Much of this she owed to one stronger than herself, who had guided her while her outlook was changing, while she was finding herself.

Fred had been the great factor in the development of her womanhood. As she glanced at her altered self, unconsciously, she attributed to him more than his proper share of influence in her regeneration. She forgot "Stoney," the Fitz-Warrens, the hard life, the education of the open sky and broad prairies, and all that their associations had meant. She saw Fred as the master magician, the waving

of whose wand had created this new woman.

He had clung persistently to his divination of what was her real character. He had plumb-ed the depths of her soul and sounded the solid rock in her. He had almost forced her, in his quiet way, to step outside the narrow circle of personal grievances, to cease pitying herself, and look upon the bigger things that the world held open to her.

A word here, a word there, a suggestion, an opportunity placed before her, the quiet urging the surety of support and interest, the endeavor to surround her with the little things that pleased her—these were some of his methods of developing her.

She realized the trial she had been, during those first days on the prairie, when he had given all and she nothing. She had not given him her young heart's love, the lighter love of youth. An abiding thankfulness filled her as she realized that another man, who loved her less, would have been chilled and driven from her long ago. But he had remained loyal and true, and now the deeper love of her womanhood was his.

Her mind turned to all that lay before her in her Western home. They were making of

life something fine and worth while! The results, so pleasing to dwell upon, were not from good management alone. They came from high courage, a faith, a humor, good health and Fred's dogged persistence.

She longed for the throb and the thrill of her adopted land. Now it was her land more than ever. She knew its satisfactions. Above all, it was a country where character is more important than an ancient name.

In the great land she saw Fred, so handsome and fearless, and, in his calm way, so commanding. She forgot everything and everyone, save Fred. She thought of him with eager longing. Could she but see him for even a moment now! She sat there, inhaling the wafts of rose scent, without moving, as it were, in a happy trance. In her satisfaction, she went over the lines that had been her class motto at school:

"Not—How fared the soul through the trials she pass'd?  
But—What is the state of that soul at the last?"

It was by the sound of a firm step on the path and the view of a figure in the rustic

archway, that she was called back to realities.

She felt annoyed at the disturbance of her dreams. A feeling of resentment surged through her that these pleasant dreams and memories, these dear thoughts of her husband, should be intruded upon.

The step was nearer, now pausing in the path, now moving on. Twilight was stealing over the garden. It was difficult to see clearly. A man's tall figure came along.

"I've been looking for you, Redgold," came Fred's voice.

She had thought him across the Atlantic! That he should be here, right here, when she so needed him! All of her being cried out to him!

She was in his arms! No time for explanation—just sweet, sweet content!

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE OLD EAST WINDOW

The law of life, it is said, rests upon a delicately constructed scale of penalties and compensations. Redgold had paid another's penalty. Now came the great compensations in that unity with her father, her husband, her old home—moments, hours, days, that in their satisfaction, transcended any experience that she had known.

Inseparable companions were Redgold, her husband and her father. The old Earl dwelt much on the past; but "God gave us memory that we might have roses in December." The dear father was often in reverie—lost in meditation as he walked in the garden, or, haply, in the evenings, of soft musings in the old library. Scene after scene he conjured up; those associations with his much-loved wife were fairest in his memory. He took pleasure in reviewing her pursuits, repeating her remarks, seeking her old haunts. One of these was the old east window. He delighted in watching

the moon rise over Elkhorn Hill, in the spot where he so often sat with his beloved wife. He would have his daughter and Fred share the attraction.

The most memorable moments in life are those in which the cross-currents of our being rush against each other—joy and sadness, hope and disappointment. Redgold had such an experience as they stood by the circular window in that old east wing. There she had hidden, in among the palms, and life had dealt what appeared its cruelest blow.

The scene again wore its moonlight vesture. The lawn, stretching to the slope, was filled with mystery; the lovely "moon-lady" was just as enchanting; the silvery light held the same magic.

In their fellowship, all were more strongly impressed with the great changes that had come upon them. The dear father called to mind, once more, those years with his adored wife, passing back and back, through the maze



of years, to older and dearer memories. For long moments they occupied his attention.

"She loved the moonlight," he finally whispered. "I feel she is with us now, walking across those shadows, her dear face glimmering in the mellow light." He saw her in her young girlhood, in her matured womanhood, more treasured with the years.

"Do you remember," Redgold whispered, "how we lingered here, feeling the cool, sweet evening coming on? How we cried with delight as the moon, slowly, slowly rose in the eastern sky, and the 'lamps,' as we called the stars, began to brighten the heavens?"

The old man nodded his head. "And she explained to you the meaning of those stars. Then, little girl, you learned of those Christian graces that so abounded in your mother. She gave much beauty to our lives."

He paused for a while; Redgold softly caressed his hand. Finally he breathed out:

"She was the very crown of womanhood."

Redgold lost some of his words. His voice almost faded out of her ears. Strange, weird sensations came before her mental vision. The voice of her father passed farther and farther away, and she was wrapped in a mystic still-

ness. In imagination, she was listening to the stealthy tread of that figure along the old hall. The scene before her was a blur.

She saw that she was in the strange position of having forgiven one and not the other. The magnetism of her father's veneration turned her mind to that stored-up bitterness. The old incident was closed. Of the three, she alone was alive and happy. Carried along by her father's enthusiasm, she gave herself free reign to rise above her bitterness; she forced her mind to wipe out the unpleasant memory. Listening to her father, absorbing his remarks, she felt a rigorous shudder, as though something vital were coming to her. She allowed the feeling full sway. From out the crucible of trial and suffering she felt her soul emerging, free and glorified.

In an instant the two forms that had intruded upon her were changed. She saw herself and her husband, clothed in white. In her ear rung the words: "These are they which came out of great tribulation" into perfect joy and peace. She knew it for the regeneration of her life.

Her father's voice was again in her ears. Her mind was once more attentive.

"Live up to her wonderful memory, dear daughter," he continued. "Her unwavering love was the climax of my happiness. Her loss was a hard blow, but we shall soon meet again."

The meaning of his words reached her and she found herself looking on that memory, even with her father's eyes. She was swept clean of all feeling but the sweetest, kindest, towards her mother's memory. Such was the magical effect of her father's strong, thorough-going, confident love.

"God rest her soul," he whispered, "the soul of a noble, beautiful woman. We are so blest in having had her."

Redgold's heart warmed with thankfulness that she had allowed him to retain his sacred memories.

She turned, and in that white light, the light that had once shown her another picture, caught, the expression of her husband's face. She saw the tenderness, the affection that was there. With a stir of her pulses, a glory, a great sympathy in her heart, she nestled to him. They were drawn close, by the peace that came out of the beauty and mystery of the hour and the association.

It was a time fraught with joy that only those can know who, through tribulation, have found their love. They were all under the spell of the moment—one of those in life that are sacramental. Their voices were lowered; they stood very still, close together, their heads tipped back, their faces upraised, silently, to receive the immensity of the star-lit heavens, the mellow silver-lighted world.

"God moves in a mysterious way. His wonders to perform," Fred whispered.

"He has brought us home again and for this glorious moment," she murmured.

"My children," the old Earl said, slowly, softly, as though conscious of the disappearing actors, the cleared stage, the almost-finished scene, the settling pall: "I realize now the value of that gift which Jesus made: 'My peace I give unto you.'"

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE DEBT OF HAPPINESS

At an early hour the following Sunday the church-bells began to ring.

"Church-bells make me feel so melancholy," Redgold remarked, as they listened. "They bring to mind Poe's lines:

"What a world of solemn thought their monody compels!"

"They make me feel glad and thankful," Fred answered, "that our happiness is now complete. They remind me of other lines:

"Hear the mellow wedding bells,

Golden bells;

What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!"

"You see, I quote the lines that have to do with the wedding. By the way, we have a debt to pay."

"A debt?"

"Possibly more my debt than yours; but it is our debt, and I intend to pay it."

She looked with startled air, striving to spell some meaning in his words.

His face was impassive as he continued: "But, for a while, the matter is mine."

She interjected questions and suppositions, but Fred was firm. His refusal to take her on any of his trips to London increased the mystery.

The weeks sped on; they were arranging for a return to their Western home. Their days were filled to overflowing in an effort to crowd into them the hundred and one things that people wish to do when they are turning their backs on England—"That stone set in the silver sea."

One plan, made in the earlier days of their visit, still remained unperformed: to attend service in the little church where they were married. Fred had suggested it, and her heart warmed at his pretty sentiment. He was in a strangely emotional state these days, she thought, as she recalled his boyish good humor and his intense, enthralled happiness.

The day came. As they arrived at the church in suburban London, Fred turned to her with: "There will be a small innovation in the service this morning and you may be asked to take a part in it."

His remark, so unexpected, gave her a vague idea. Then a light dawned, and in its twilight the mystery seemed half explained.

The melody of the bells died away. As she entered, she was conscious of the tranquility of the atmosphere. There was a sound as of a faint wind stealing through the church; in an undertone, the hushed music of the organ. Redgold was lost in the solemnity, as the clergyman's voice rose in prayer and praise.

Before her mind came a series of pictures, sharpened now, and clear in every detail: her wedding day, a dull dreary day of rain, when all London appeared to be weeping; the lonely, frightened girl; the worried young man; the tardy clergyman; the weird ceremony.

Her gaze drifted and she saw, on the eastern side of the church, a veiled window. Fresh suspicions flitted through her mind, elusive, intangible, changing form in the very attempt to shape them. Now they linked the window with herself, with her mother, with Jack; again the bond was broken. Sometimes the covered window was the impelling motive of their presence. The next moment it was a mere passing incident, utterly disconnected. She looked at her husband for a solution. As well might

she have looked at the face of the sphinx.

Presently the clergyman mounted the pulpit and began his sermon. It focussed on the examples of great men and the lessons taught by their lives. He placed emphasis upon energy, arguing that it constituted the greatest factor in success, mental, material or religious. His well-modulated voice rolled through the church, carrying added conviction to the words of the poet:

"The heights by great men reached and kept,  
Were not attained by sudden flight,  
But they, while their companions slept,  
Were toiling upward in the night."

She linked the window with some person of attainments and renown, who, perhaps, had risen from a lower station in life and, by great energy, won high fame. Some one, it might be, connected with the great war.

As he continued his discourse, she saw it gradually narrowing down the list of her possibilities. Presently she felt, in some mysterious way, that he would very soon bring in Jack Travers' name. The explanation of her husband's visits to London, and his strange reserve regarding them, came gradually before her. She prepared herself for the announcement that finally came:



"Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Ashley have erected this handsome window to the memory of Captain Jack Travers, V.C., who died for his country."

She was ready when called upon to unveil the window.

With the falling of the drapery came the realization of what Fred had done. The memorial to Jack and his redemption, was her husband's tribute to her. It paid his debt to the dead for the gift of her. The expression of his gratitude almost overwhelmed her.

The ceremony and the service were finally ended. Through her deep thought broke the voice of the clergyman in the Benediction:

"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you, and give you His peace."

Many crowded to the window, mostly from curiosity, for very few had known Jack even by name. Redgold and her husband felt it a sacrilege to mix their deep interest with the mere inquisitiveness of the onlookers. They hurried from the church, with rather hasty responses to the continued thanks of the clergyman.

That window drew her. It was the embodiment of her life. She saw in it her sufferings obliterated in her happiness. The fleeting days reminded her of the intended departure for "Fairacres." In proportion to the diminishing time, the drawing-strength of the window increased. She must see it again—and alone!

It was a dull, leaden day, suggestive of her wedding morn. She found herself in that little church and not able to account for her arrival there. Some mysterious, irresistible attraction had carried her. Almost without knowing it, she was standing before the window.

Despite the half-darkness in the church and the dull light outside, the harmony of color cast a spell over her. She studied the design: two angelic figures, in long and beautiful robes of an almost silver whiteness, held an open scroll, on which was the inscription:

"GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN."

Upon those angelic faces appeared the effects of all the sorrows that prove character. One showed patience and endurance, truly a face of Christian resignation. In the other was written the satisfaction of victorious suffering, the joy, the peace of entire expiation.

It was a face of redemption. And above that scroll, which told of a man's struggle, were the clasped hands of complete unity.

The faces impressed her as almost rising from their setting in a plea for understanding. She saw them as the allegory of Jack's life.

The border, by a series of medallions, suggested, in miniature, the story of St. Paul, who fought the good fight. In that sacred hour she realized how eminently fitting was the association with him who was blinded and saw light. Truly symbolic, she thought. The pathos of it brought a surge of tenderness. All the sadness and magic sweetness of her life were blended in the great revelation before her.

In the emblem was a sense of the fine spirit of Jack, that inner stability that endures. She seemed to catch the very tones of his voice in St. Paul's words:

"Neither count I my life dear unto myself."

And suddenly, like a bright star, gleamed the face of Fred, with his high nobility, that same inner strength. She saw their spirits mingled in a flame that was eternal.

As the andante of the organ, it soothed her. The mingling color-masses lent an almost un-

earthly loveliness to the scene. She wondered if, in the soft glow, that light which precedes the breaking of the clouds, the reflected colors were not more entrancing than in the full radiance of the sun. The light shone like mother-of-pearl.

Transfigured, a Saint Cecilia she appeared, appealing eyes upraised, as the beauty, like subdued music, filled her soul.

"The morning of triumph" was complete, as, in a sudden glory, the clouds broke. The sunlight, as if carrying the joys of Heaven, sent forth a shower of beams, "Rising with a splendor that never shall set."

In that soul-stirring hour, caressed by a light, as though wafted through the ruby and golden tints of autumn leaves, she stood in what seemed an aureola that held God's choicest blessings. Though she could not see it, the radiant colors of one word, "LOVE," fell upon her as though marking her for their own.

She felt it amongst the most impressive experiences of her life. Jack's spirit was never more potent than in those sunlit beams. There was magic for her in that blessing. It glorified

her thought: the realization of the beautiful ideal of lifelong constancy that Fred and she had made.

In those tense moments she prayed for the fulfilment of their wish to pass hand-in-hand into the sunset of life and to be together when night should fall.